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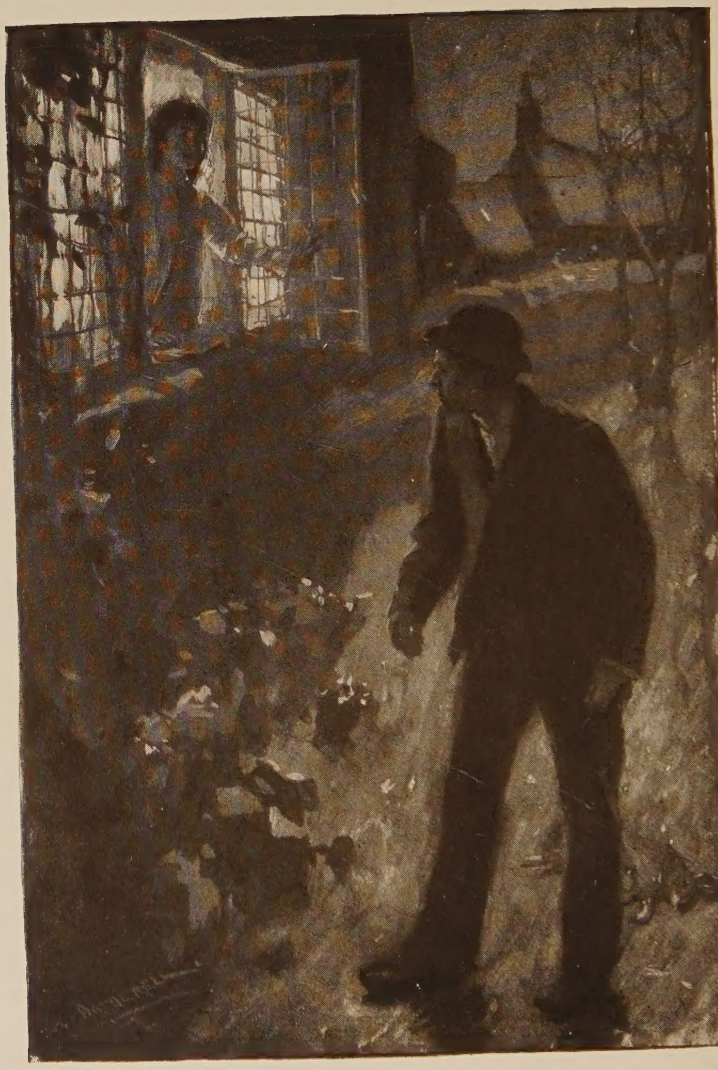

"'JUDE!' SAID A VOICE, TIMIDLY"

Jude the Obscure

BY

Thomas Hardy

Vol. II

ILLUSTRATED

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Part IV

AT SHASTON

"Whoso prefers either Matrimony or other Ordinance before the Good of Man and the plain Exigence & Charity, let him profess Papist, or Protestant, or what he will, he is no better than a Pharisee."—J. MILTON.

I

SHASTON, the ancient British Palladour,

"From whose foundation first such strange reports arise"

(as Drayton sang it), was, and is, in itself the city of a dream. Vague imaginings of its castle, its three mints, its magnificent apsidal Abbey, the chief glory of South Wessex, its twelve churches, its shrines, chantries, hospitals, its gabled freestone mansions—all now ruthlessly swept away—throw the visitor, even against his will, into a pensive melancholy, which the stimulating atmosphere and limitless landscape around him can scarcely dispel. The spot was the burial-place of a king and a queen, of abbots and abbesses, saints and bishops, knights and squires. The bones of King Edward "the Martyr," carefully removed hither for holy preservation, brought Shaston a renown which made it the resort of pilgrims from every part of Europe, and enabled it to maintain a reputation extending far beyond English shores. To this fair creation of the great Middle-Age the Dissolution was, as historians tells us, the death-knell. With the destruction of the enormous abbey the whole place collapsed in a general ruin; the Martyr's bones met with the fate of the sacred pile that held them, and not a stone is now left to tell where they lie.

The natural picturesqueness and singularity of the town still remain; but, strange to say, these qualities, which were noted by many writers in ages when scenic beauty is said not to have been unappreciated, are passed over

in this, and one of the queerest and quaintest spots in England stands virtually unvisited to-day.

It has a unique position on the summit of an almost perpendicular scarp, rising on the north, south, and west sides of the borough out of the deep alluvial Vale of Blackmoor, the view from the Castle Green over three counties of verdant pasture — South, Mid, and Nether Wessex—being as sudden a surprise to the unexpectant traveller's eyes as the medicinal air is to his lungs. Impossible to a railway, it can best be reached on foot, next best by light vehicles; and it is hardly accessible to these but by a sort of isthmus on the northeast, that connects it with the high chalk table-land on that side.

Such is, and such was, the now world-forgotten Shaston, or Palladour. Its situation rendered water the great want of the town; and within living memory horses, donkeys, and men may have been seen toiling up the winding ways to the top of the steep, laden with tubs and barrels filled from the wells beneath the mountain, and hawkers retailing their contents at the price of a half-penny a bucketful.

This difficulty in the water supply, together with two other odd facts—namely, that the chief graveyard slopes up as steeply as a roof behind the church, and that in former times the town passed through a curious period of corruption, conventual and domestic—gave rise to the saying that Shaston was remarkable for three consolations to man such as the world afforded not elsewhere: it was a place where the churchyard lay nearer heaven than the church steeple, where beer was more plentiful than water, and where there were more wanton women than honest wives and maids. It is also said that after the Middle Ages the inhabitants were too poor to pay their priests, and hence were compelled to pull down their churches, and refrain altogether from the public worship of God—a necessity which they bemoaned over their cups in the settles of their inns on Sunday afternoons. In those days

the Shastonians were apparently not without a sense of humor.

There was another peculiarity — this a modern one — which Shaston appeared to owe to its site. It was the resting-place and headquarters of the proprietors of wandering vans, shows, shooting-galleries, and other itinerant concerns, whose business lay largely at fairs and markets. As strange wild birds are seen assembled on some lofty promontory, meditatively pausing for longer flights, or to return by the course they followed thither, so here, in this cliff-town, stood in stultified silence the yellow and green caravans bearing names not local, as if surprised by a change in the landscape so violent as to hinder their further progress; and here they usually remained all the winter till they turned to seek again their old tracks in the following spring.

It was to this breezy and whimsical spot that Jude ascended from the nearest station for the first time in his life about four o'clock one afternoon, and entering on the summit of the peak after a toilsome climb, passed the first houses of the aerial town, and drew towards the school-house. The hour was too early; the pupils were still in school, humming small, like a swarm of gnats; and he withdrew a few steps along Abbey Walk, whence he regarded the spot which fate had made the home of all he loved best in the world. In front of the schools, which were extensive and stone-built, grew two enormous beeches with smooth mouse-colored trunks, as such trees will only grow on chalk uplands. Within the mullioned and transomed windows he could see the black, brown, and flaxen crowns of the scholars over the sills, and, to pass the time away, he walked down to the level terrace where the Abbey gardens once had spread, his heart throbbing in spite of him.

Unwilling to enter till the children were dismissed, he remained here till young voices could be heard in the open air, and girls in white pinafores over red and blue

frocks appeared dancing along the paths which the abbess, prioress, sub-prioress, and fifty nuns had demurely paced three centuries earlier. Retracing his steps he found that he had waited too long, and that Sue had gone out into the town at the heels of the last scholar, Mr. Phillotson having been absent all the afternoon at a teachers' meeting at Shottsford.

Jude went into the empty school-room and sat down, the girl who was sweeping the floor having informed him that Mrs. Phillotson would be back again in a few minutes. A piano stood near—actually the old piano that Phillotson had possessed at Marygreen—and though the dark afternoon almost prevented him seeing the notes, Jude touched them in his humble way, and could not help modulating into the hymn which had so affected him in the previous week.

A figure moved behind him, and, thinking it was still the girl with the broom, Jude took no notice, till the person came close and laid her fingers lightly upon his bass hand. The imposed hand was a little one he seemed to know, and he turned.

"Don't stop," said Sue. "I like it. I learned it before I left Melchester. They used to play it in the Training-School."

"I can't strum before you! Play it for me."

"Oh, well—I don't mind."

Sue sat down, and her rendering of the piece, though not remarkable, seemed divine as compared with his own. She, like him, was evidently touched — to her own surprise—by the recalled air; and when she had finished, and he moved his hand towards her, it met his own half-way. Jude grasped it—just as he had done before her marriage.

"It is odd," she said, in a voice quite changed, "that I should care about that air; because—"

"Because what?"

"I am not that sort—quite."

"Not easily moved?"

"I didn't quite mean that."

"Oh, but you *are* one of that sort, for you are just like me at heart."

"But not at head."

She played on, and suddenly turned round; and by an unpremeditated instinct, each clasped the other's hand again.

She uttered a forced little laugh as she relinquished his quickly. "How funny!" she said. "I wonder what we both did that for?"

"I suppose because we are both alike, as I said before."

"Not in our thoughts! Perhaps a little in our feelings."

"And they rule thoughts. . . . Isn't it enough to make one blaspheme that the composer of that hymn is one of the most commonplace men I ever met!"

"What—you know him?"

"I went to see him."

"Oh, you goose—to do just what I should have done! Why did you?"

"Because we are not alike," he said, dryly.

"Now we'll have some tea," said Sue. "Shall we have it here instead of in my house? It is no trouble to get the kettle and things brought in. We don't live at the school, you know, but in that ancient dwelling across the way called Old-Grove's Place. It is so antique and dismal that it depresses me dreadfully. Such houses are very well to visit, but not to live in—I feel crushed into the earth by the weight of so many previous lives there spent. In a new place like these schools there is only your own life to support. Sit down, and I'll tell Ada to bring the tea-things across."

He waited in the light of the stove, the door of which she flung open before going out, and when she returned, followed by the maiden with tea, they sat down by the same light, assisted by the blue rays of a spirit-lamp under the brass kettle on the stand.

"This is one of your wedding-presents to me," she said, signifying the latter.

"Yes," said Jude.

The kettle of his gift sang with some satire in its note, to his mind; and to change the subject he said, "Do you know of any good readable edition of the uncanonical books of the New Testament? You don't read them in the school, I suppose?"

"Oh, dear, no!—'twould alarm the neighborhood. . . . Yes, there is one. I am not familiar with it now, though I was interested in it when my former friend was alive. Cowper's *Apocryphal Gospels*."

"That sounds like what I want." His thoughts, however, reverted with a twinge to the "former friend"—by whom she meant, as he knew, the University comrade of her earlier days. He wondered if she talked of him to Phillotson.

"The Gospel of Nicodemus is very nice," she went on, to keep him from his jealous thoughts, which she read clearly, as she always did. Indeed, when they talked on an indifferent subject, as now, there was ever a second silent conversation passing between their emotions, so perfect was the reciprocity between them. "It is quite like the genuine article. All cut up into verses, too; so that it is like one of the other evangelists read in a dream, when things are the same, yet not the same. But, Jude, do you take an interest in those questions still? Are you getting up *Apologetica*?"

"Yes. I am reading Divinity harder than ever."

She regarded him curiously.

"Why do you look at me like that?" said Jude.

"Oh—why do you want to know?"

"I am sure you can tell me anything I may be ignorant of in that subject. You must have learned a lot of everything from your dear dead friend!"

"We won't get on to that now!" she coaxed. "Will you be carving out at that church again next week, where you learned the pretty hymn?"

"Yes, perhaps."

"That will be very nice. Shall I come and see you there? It is in this direction, and I could come any afternoon by train for half an hour?"

"No. Don't come!"

"What—aren't we going to be friends, then, any longer, as we used to be?"

"No."

"I didn't know that. I thought you were always going to be kind to me!"

"No, I am not."

"What have I done, then? I am sure I thought we two—" The *tremolo* in her voice caused her to break off.

"Sue, I sometimes think you are a flirt," said he, abruptly.

There was a momentary pause, till she suddenly jumped up, and, to his surprise, he saw by the kettle-flame that her face was flushed.

"I can't talk to you any longer, Jude," she said, the tragic contralto note having come back as of old. "It is getting too dark to stay together like this, after playing morbid Good-Friday tunes that make one feel what one shouldn't! . . . We mustn't sit and talk in this way any more! Yes—you must go away, for you mistake me! I am very much the reverse of what you say so cruelly—oh, Jude, it *was* cruel to say that! Yet I can't tell you the truth—I should shock you by letting you know how I give way to my impulses, and how much I feel that I shouldn't have been provided with attractiveness unless it were meant to be exercised! Some women's love of being loved is insatiable; and so, often, is their love of loving; and in the last case they may find that they can't give it continuously to the chamber-officer appointed by the bishop's license to receive it. But you are so straightforward, Jude, that you can't understand me. . . . Now you must go. I am sorry my husband is not at home."

"Are you?"

"I perceive I have said that in mere convention! Honestly, I don't think I am sorry. It does not matter, either way, sad to say!"

As they had overdone the grasp of hands some time sooner, she touched his fingers but lightly when he went out now. He had hardly gone from the door when, with a dissatisfied look, she jumped on a form and opened the iron casement of a window beneath which he was passing in the path without. "When do you leave here to catch your train, Jude?" she asked.

He looked up in some surprise. "The coach that runs to meet it goes in three-quarters of an hour or so."

"What will you do with yourself for the time?"

"Oh—wander about, I suppose. Perhaps I shall go and sit in the old church."

"It does seem hard of me to pack you off so! You have thought enough of churches, Heaven knows, without going into one in the dark. Stay there."

"Where?"

"Where you are. I can talk to you better like this than when you were inside. . . . It was so kind and tender of you to give up half a day's work to come to see me! . . . You are Joseph, the dreamer of dreams, dear Jude. And a tragic Don Quixote. And sometimes you are St. Stephen, who, while they were stoning him, could see heaven opened. Oh, my poor friend and comrade, you'll suffer yet!"

Now that the high window-sill was between them, so that he could not get at her, she seemed not to mind indulging in a frankness she had feared at close quarters. "I have been thinking," she continued, still in the tone of one brimful of feeling, "that the social moulds civilization fits us into have no more relation to our actual shapes than the conventional shapes of the constellations have to the real star-patterns. I am called Mrs. Richard Phillotson, living a calm wedded life with my counterpart of that name. But I am not really Mrs. Richard Phillot-

son, but a woman tossed about, all alone, with aberrant passions and unaccountable antipathies. . . . Now you mustn't wait longer, or you will lose the coach. Come and see me again. You must come to the house then."

"Yes," said Jude. "When shall it be?"

"To-morrow week. Good-bye — good-bye!" She stretched out her hand and stroked his forehead pitifully —just once. Jude said good-bye, and went away into the darkness.

Passing along Bimport Street he thought he heard the wheels of the coach departing, and, truly enough, when he reached the Duke's Arms in the Market Place the coach had gone. It was impossible for him to get to the station on foot in time for this train, and he settled himself perforce to wait for the next—the last to Melchester that night.

He wandered about a while, obtained something to eat, and then, having another half-hour on his hands, his feet involuntarily took him through the venerable graveyard of Trinity Church, with its avenues of limes, in the direction of the schools again. They were entirely in darkness. She had said she lived over the way at Old-Grove's Place, a house which he soon discovered from her description of its antiquity.

A glimmering candle-light shone from a front window, the shutters being yet unclosed. He could see the interior clearly — the floor sinking a couple of steps below the road without, which had become raised during the centuries since the house was built. Sue, evidently just come in, was standing with her hat on in this front parlor or sitting-room, whose walls were lined with wainscoting of panelled oak reaching from floor to ceiling, the latter being crossed by huge moulded beams only a little way above her head. The mantel-piece was of the same heavy description, carved with Jacobean pilasters and scroll-work. The centuries did, indeed, ponderously overhang a young wife who passed her time here.

She had opened a rosewood work-box, and was looking at a photograph. Having contemplated it a little while she pressed it against her bosom, and put it again in its place.

Then, becoming aware that she had not obscured the windows, she came forward to do so, candle in hand. It was too dark for her to see Jude without, but he could see her face distinctly, and there was an unmistakable tearfulness about the dark, long-lashed eyes.

She closed the shutters, and Jude turned away to pursue his solitary journey home. "Whose photograph was she looking at?" he said. He had once given her his; but she had others, he knew. Yet it was his, surely?

He knew he should go to see her again, according to her invitation. Those earnest men he read of, the saints, whom Sue, with gentle irreverence, called his demi-gods, would have shunned such encounters if they doubted their own strength. But he could not. He might fast and pray during the whole interval, but the human was more powerful in him than the Divine.

II

However, if God disposed not, woman did. The next morning but one brought him this note from her:

"Don't come next week. On your own account don't. We were too free, under the influence of that morbid hymn and the twilight. Think no more than you can help of

"Susanna Florence Mary."

The disappointment was keen. He knew her mood, the look of her face, when she subscribed herself at length thus. But, whatever her mood, he could not say she was wrong in her view. He replied:

"I acquiesce. You are right. It is a lesson in renunciation which, I suppose, I ought to learn at this season. Jude."

He despatched the note on Easter Eve, and there seemed a finality in their decisions. But other forces and laws than theirs were in operation. On Easter Monday morning he received a message from the Widow Edlin, whom he had directed to telegraph if anything serious happened:

"Your aunt is sinking. Come at once."

He threw down his tools and went. Three and a half hours later he was crossing the downs about Marygreen, and presently plunged into the concave field across which the short cut was made to the village. As he ascended on the other side a laboring man, who had been watching

his approach from a gate across the path, moved uneasily and prepared to speak. "I can see in his face that she is dead," said Jude. "Poor Aunt Drusilla!"

It was as he had supposed, and Mrs. Edlin had sent out the man to break the news to him.

"She wouldn't have knowed 'ee. She lay like a doll wi' glass eyes; so it didn't matter that you wasn't here," said he.

Jude went on to the house, and in the afternoon, when everything was done, and the layers-out had finished their beer and gone, he sat down alone in the silent place. It was absolutely necessary to communicate with Sue, though two or three days earlier they had agreed to mutual severance. He wrote in the briefest terms:

"Aunt Drusilla is dead, having been taken almost suddenly. The funeral is on Friday afternoon."

He remained in and about Marygreen through the intervening days, went out on Friday morning to see that the grave was finished, and wondered if Sue would come. She had not written, and that seemed to signify rather that she would come than that she would not. Having timed her by her only possible train, he locked the door about mid-day, and crossed the hollow field to the verge of the upland by the Brown House, where he stood and looked over the vast prospect northward, and over the nearer landscape in which Alfredston stood. Two miles behind it a jet of white steam was travelling from the left to the right of the picture.

There was a long time to wait, even now, till he would know if she had arrived. He did wait, however, and at last a small hired vehicle pulled up at the bottom of the hill, and a person alighted, the conveyance going back, while the passenger began ascending the hill. He knew her; and she looked so slender to-day that it seemed as if she might be crushed in the intensity of a too passion-

ate embrace—such as it was not for him to give. Two-thirds of the way up her head suddenly took a solicitous poise, and he knew that she had at that moment recognized him. Her face soon began a pensive smile, which lasted till, having descended a little way, he met her.

"I thought," she began, with nervous quickness, "that it would be so sad to let you attend the funeral alone! And so—at the last moment—I came."

"Dear, faithful Sue!" mumured Jude.

With the elusiveness of her curious double nature, however, Sue did not stand still for any further greeting, though it wanted some time to the burial. A pathos so unusually compounded as that which attached to this hour was unlikely to repeat itself for years, if ever, and Jude would have paused and meditated and conversed. But Sue either saw it not at all, or, seeing it more than he, would not allow herself to feel it.

The sad and simple ceremony was soon over, their progress to the church being almost at a trot, the bustling undertaker having a more important funeral an hour later, three miles off. Drusilla was put into the new ground, quite away from her ancestors. Sue and Jude had gone side by side to the grave, and now sat down to tea in the familiar house, their lives united at least in this last attention to the dead.

"She was opposed to marriage, from first to last, you say?" murmured Sue.

"Yes. Particularly for members of our family."

Her eyes met his, and remained on him a while.

"We are rather a sad family, don't you think, Jude?"

"She said we made bad husbands and wives. Certainly we make unhappy ones. At all events, I do, for one!"

Sue was silent. "Is it wrong, Jude," she said, with a tentative tremor, "for a husband or wife to tell a third person that they are unhappy in their marriage? If a marriage ceremony is a religious thing, it is possibly

wrong; but if it is only a sordid contract, based on material convenience in householding, rating, and taxing, and the inheritance of land and money by children, making it necessary that the male parent should be known—which it seems to be—why surely a person may say, even proclaim upon the housetops, that it hurts and grieves him or her?"

"I have said so, anyhow, to you."

Presently she went on: "Are there many couples, do you think, where one dislikes the other for no definite fault?"

"Yes, I suppose. If either cares for another person, for instance."

"But even apart from that? Wouldn't the woman, for example, be very bad-natured if she didn't like to live with her husband; merely"—her voice undulated, and he guessed things—"merely because she had a personal feeling against it—a physical objection—a fastidiousness, or whatever it may be called—although she might respect and be grateful to him? I am merely putting a case. Ought she to try to overcome her pruderies?"

Jude threw a troubled look at her. He said, looking away: "It would be just one of those cases in which my experiences go contrary to my dogmas. Speaking as an order-loving man—which I hope I am, though I fear I am not—I should say yes. Speaking from experience and unbiassed nature, I should say no. . . . Sue, I believe you are not happy!"

"Yes, I am!" said she, excitedly. "How can a woman be unhappy who has only been married eight weeks to a man she chose freely?"

"Chose freely!"

"Why do you repeat it? . . . But I have to go back by the six-o'clock train. You will be staying on here, I suppose?"

"For a few days, to wind up aunt's affairs. This house is gone now. Shall I go to the train with you?"

A little laugh of objection came from Sue. "I think not. You may come part of the way."

"But stop—you can't go to-night! That train won't take you to Shaston. You must stay and go back to-morrow. Mrs. Edlin has plenty of room, if you don't like to stay here?"

"Very well," she said, dubiously. "I didn't tell him I would come for certain."

Jude went to the widow's house adjoining, to let her know; and returning in a few minutes, sat down again.

"It is horrible how we are circumstanced, Sue—horrible!" he said, abruptly, with his eyes bent to the floor.

"No! Why?"

"I can't tell you all my part of the gloom. Your part is that you ought not to have married him. I saw it before you had done it, but I thought I mustn't interfere. I was wrong. I ought to have!"

"But what makes you assume all this, dear?"

"Because — I can see you through your feathers, my poor little bird!"

Her hand lay on the table, and Jude put his upon it. Sue drew hers away.

"That's absurd, Sue," cried he, "after what we've been talking about! I am more strict and formal than you, if it comes to that; and that you should object to such an innocent action shows that you are ridiculously inconsistent!"

"Perhaps it was too prudish," she said, repentantly. "Only, I have fancied it was a sort of trick of ours—too frequent perhaps. There, you may hold it as much as you like. Is that good of me?"

"Yes; very."

"But I must tell him."

"Who?"

"Richard."

"Oh — of course, if you think it necessary. But as it means nothing, it may be bothering him needlessly."

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"Well—are you sure you mean it only as my cousin?"

"Absolutely sure. I have no feelings of love left in me."

"That's news. How has it come to be?"

"I've seen Arabella."

She winced at the hit; then said, curiously, "When did you see her?"

"When I was at Christminster."

"So she's come back; and you never told me! I suppose you will live with her now?"

"Of course—just as you live with your husband."

She looked at the window-pots with the geraniums and cactuses, withered for want of attention, and through them at the outer distance, till her eyes began to grow moist. "What is it?" said Jude, in a softened tone.

"Why should you be so glad to go back to her if—if—what you used to say to me is still true—I mean if it were true then? Of course it is not now! How could your heart go back to Arabella so soon?"

"A special Providence, I suppose, helped it on its way."

"Ah—it isn't true!" she said, with gentle resentment. "You are teasing me—that's all—because you think I am not happy!"

"I don't know. I don't wish to know."

"If I were unhappy it would be my fault, my wickedness, not that I should have a right to dislike him. He is considerate to me in everything; and he is very interesting, from the amount of general knowledge he has acquired by reading everything that comes in his way. . . . Do you think, Jude, that a man ought to marry a woman his own age, or one younger than himself—eighteen years—as I am than he?"

"It depends upon what they feel for each other."

He gave her no opportunity of self-satisfaction, and she had to go on unaided, which she did in a vanquished tone, verging on tears:

"I—I think I must be equally honest with you as you have been with me. Perhaps you have seen what it is I want to say—that though I like Mr. Phillotson as a friend, I don't like him—it is a torture to me to—live with him as a husband! There, now I have let it out—I couldn't help it, although I have been—pretending I am happy. Now you'll have a contempt for me forever, I suppose!" She bent down her face upon her hands as they lay upon the cloth, and silently sobbed in little jerks that made the fragile three-legged table quiver.

"I have only been married a month or two!" she went on, still remaining bent upon the table, and talking into her hands. "And it is said that what a woman shrinks from—in the early days of her marriage—she shakes down to with comfortable indifference in half a dozen years. But that is much like saying that the amputation of a limb is no affliction, since a person gets comfortably accustomed to the use of a wooden leg or arm in the course of time!"

Jude could hardly speak, but he said, "I thought there was something wrong, Sue! Oh, I thought there was!"

"But it is not as you think!—there is nothing wrong except my own wickedness, I suppose you'd call it—a repugnance on my part, for a reason I cannot disclose, and what would not be admitted as one by the world in general! . . . What tortures me so much is the necessity of being responsive to this man whenever he wishes, good as he is morally!—the dreadful contract to feel in a particular way, in a matter whose essence is its voluntariness! . . . I wish he would beat me, or be faithless to me, or do some open thing that I could talk about as a justification for feeling as I do! But he does nothing, except that he has grown a little cold since he has found out how I feel. That's why he didn't come to the funeral. . . . Oh, I am very miserable — I don't know what to do! . . . Don't come near me, Jude, because you mustn't."

But he had jumped up and put his face against hers—or rather against her ear, her face being inaccessible.

"I told you not to, Jude!"

"I know you did—I only wish to—console you! It all arose through my being married before we met, didn't it? You would have been my wife, Sue, wouldn't you, if it hadn't been for that?"

Instead of replying she rose quickly, and saying she was going to walk to her aunt's grave in the churchyard to recover herself, went out of the house. Jude did not follow her. Twenty minutes later he saw her cross the village green towards Mrs. Edlin's, and soon she sent a little girl to fetch her bag, and tell him she was too tired to see him again that night.

In the lonely room of his aunt's house Jude sat watching the cottage of the Widow Edlin as it disappeared behind the night shade. He knew that Sue was sitting within its walls equally lonely and disheartened; and again questioned his devotional motto that all was for the best.

He retired to rest early, but his sleep was fitful from the sense that Sue was so near at hand. At some time near two o'clock, when he was beginning to sleep more soundly, he was aroused by a shrill squeak that had been familiar enough to him when he lived regularly at Marygreen. It was the cry of a rabbit caught in a gin. As was the little creature's habit, it did not soon repeat its cry; and probably would not do so more than once or twice, but would remain bearing its torture till the morrow, when the trapper would come and knock it on the head.

He who in his childhood had saved the lives of the earthworms now began to picture the agonies of the rabbit from its lacerated leg. If it were a "bad catch" by the hind-leg, the animal would tug during the ensuing six hours till the iron teeth of the trap had stripped the leg-bone of its flesh, when, should a weak-springed instru-

ment enable it to escape, it would die in the fields from the mortification of the limb. If it were a "good catch"—namely, by the fore-leg—the bone would be broken, and the limb nearly torn in two in attempts at an impossible escape.

Almost half an hour passed, and the rabbit repeated its cry. Jude could rest no longer till he had put it out of its pain; so dressing himself quickly he descended, and by the light of the moon went across the green in the direction of the sound. He reached the hedge bordering the widow's garden, when he stood still. The faint click of the trap as dragged about by the writhing animal guided him now, and, reaching the spot, he struck the rabbit on the back of the neck with the side of his palm, and it stretched itself out dead.

He was turning away, when he saw a woman looking out of the open casement at a window on the ground-floor of the adjacent cottage. "Jude!" said a voice, timidly—Sue's voice. "It is you—is it not?"

"Yes, dear!"

"I haven't been able to sleep at all, and then I heard the rabbit, and couldn't help thinking of what it suffered, till I felt I must come down and kill it! But I am so glad you got there first. . . . They ought not to be allowed to set these steel traps, ought they?"

Jude had reached the window, which was quite a low one, so that she was visible down to her waist. She let go the casement-stay and put her hand upon his, her moonlit face regarding him wistfully.

"Did it keep you awake?" he said.

"No; I was awake."

"How was that?"

"Oh, you know—now! I know you, with your religious doctrines, think that a married woman in trouble of a kind like mine commits a mortal sin in making a man the confidant of it, as I did you. I wish I hadn't, now!"

"Don't wish it, dear," he said. "That may have *been* my view, but my doctrines and I begin to part company."

"I knew it — I knew it! And that's why I vowed I wouldn't disturb your beliefs. But—I am *so glad* to see you!—and, oh, I didn't mean to see you again, now the last tie between us, Aunt Drusilla, is dead!"

Jude seized her hand and kissed it. "There is a stronger one left!" he said. "I'll never care about my doctrines or my religion any more! Let them go! Let me help you, even if I do love you, and even if you . . ."

"Don't say it!—I know what you mean; but I can't admit so much as that. There! Guess what you like, but don't press me to answer questions!"

"I wish you were happy, whatever I may be!"

"I *can't* be! So few could enter into my feeling—they would say 'twas my fanciful fastidiousness, or something of that sort, and condemn me. . . . It is none of the natural tragedies of love that's love's usual tragedy in civilized life, but a tragedy artificially manufactured for people who in a natural state would find relief in parting! . . . It would have been wrong, perhaps, for me to tell my distress to you, if I had been able to tell it to anybody else. But I have nobody. And I *must* tell somebody! Jude, before I married him I had never thought out fully what marriage meant, even though I knew. It was idiotic of me — there is no excuse. I was old enough, and I thought I was very experienced. So I rushed on, when I had got into that Training-School scrape, with all the cocksureness of the fool that I was! . . . I am certain one ought to be allowed to undo what one has done so ignorantly! I dare say it happens to lots of women; only they submit, and I kick. . . . When people of a later age look back upon the barbarous customs and superstitions of the times that we have the unhappiness to live in, what *will* they say!"

"You are very bitter, darling Sue! How I wish — I wish—"

"You must go in now!"

In a moment of impulse she bent over the sill, and laid her face upon his hair, weeping, and then, imprinting a scarcely perceptible little kiss upon the top of his head, withdrawing quickly, so that he could not put his arms round her, as he unquestionably would have otherwise done, she shut the casement, and he returned to his cottage.

III

SUE'S distressful confession recurred to Jude's mind all the night as being a sorrow indeed.

The morning after, when it was time for her to go, the neighbors saw her companion and herself disappearing on foot down the hill-path which led into the lonely road to Alfredston. An hour passed before he returned along the same route, and in his face there was a look of exaltation not unmixed with recklessness. An incident had occurred.

They had stood parting in the silent highway, and their tense and passionate moods had led to bewildered inquiries of each other on how far their intimacy ought to go; till they had almost quarrelled, and she had said tearfully that it was hardly proper of him as a parson in embryo to think of such a thing as kissing her even in farewell, as he now wished to do. Then she had conceded that the fact of the kiss would be nothing; all would depend upon the spirit of it. If given in the spirit of a cousin and a friend, she saw no objection; if in the spirit of a lover, she could not permit it. "Will you swear that it will not be in that spirit?" she had said.

No; he would not. And then they had turned from each other in estrangement, and gone their several ways, till at a distance of twenty or thirty yards both had looked round simultaneously. That look behind was fatal to the reserve hitherto more or less maintained. They had quickly run back, and met, and embracing most unpremeditatedly, kissed each other. When they parted for

good it was with flushed cheeks on her side, and a beating heart on his.

The kiss was a turning-point in Jude's career. Back again in the cottage, and left to reflection, he saw one thing: that though his kiss with that aerial being had seemed the purest moment of his faultful life, as long as he nourished this unlicensed tenderness it was glaringly inconsistent for him to pursue the idea of becoming the soldier and servant of a religion in which sexual love was regarded as at its best a frailty and at its worst damnation. What Sue had said in warmth was really the cold truth. When to defend his affection tooth and nail, to persist with headlong force in impassioned attentions to her, was all he thought of, he was condemned *ipso facto* as a professor of the accepted school of morals. He was as unfit, obviously, by nature, as he had been by social position, to fill the part of a propounder of accredited dogma.

Strange that his first aspiration—towards academical proficiency—had been checked by a woman, and that his second aspiration—towards apostleship—had also been checked by a woman. "Is it," he said, "that the women are to blame; or is it the artificial system of things, under which the normal sex-impulses are turned into devilish domestic gins and springes to noose and hold back those who want to progress?"

It had been his standing desire to become a prophet, however humble, to his struggling fellow-creatures, without any thought of personal gain. Yet with a wife living away from him with another husband, and himself in love erratically, the loved one's revolt against her state being possibly on his account, he had sunk to be barely respectable according to regulation views.

It was not for him to consider further; he had only to confront the obvious, which was that he had made himself quite an impostor as a law-abiding religious teacher.

At dusk that evening he went into the garden and dug a shallow hole, to which he brought out all the theological and ethical works that he possessed. He knew that, in this country of true believers, most of them were not saleable at a much higher price than waste-paper value, and preferred to get rid of them in his own way, even if he should sacrifice a little money to the sentiment of thus destroying them. Lighting some loose pamphlets to begin with, he cut the volumes into pieces as well as he could, and with a three-pronged fork shook them over the flames. They kindled, and lighted up the back of the house, and pig-sty, and his own face, till they were more or less consumed.

Though he was almost a stranger here now, passing cottagers talked to him over the garden hedge.

"Burning up your awld aunt's rubbidge, I suppose? Aye; a lot gets heaped up in nooks and corners when you've lived eighty years in one house."

It was nearly one o'clock in the morning before the leaves, covers, and binding of Jeremy Taylor, Butler, Doddridge, Paley, Pusey, Newman, and the rest had gone to ashes; but the night was quiet, and as he turned and turned the paper shreds with the fork, the sense of being no longer a hypocrite to himself afforded a relief to his mind which gave him calm. He might go on believing as before, but he professed nothing, and no longer owned and exhibited engines of faith which, as their proprietor, he might naturally be supposed to exercise on himself first of all. In his passion for Sue he could now stand as an ordinary sinner, and not as a whited sepulchre.

Meanwhile Sue, after parting from him earlier in the day, had gone along to the station, with tears in her eyes for having run back and let him kiss her. Jude ought not to have pretended that he was not a lover, and made her give way to an impulse to act unconventionally, if not wrongly. She was inclined to call it the latter; for Sue's logic was extraordinarily compounded, and seemed to

maintain that before a thing was done it might be right to do, but that being done it became wrong; or, in other words, that things which were right in theory were wrong in practice.

"I have been too weak, I think!" she jerked out as she pranced on, shaking down tear-drops now and then. "It was burning, like a lover's—oh, it was! And I won't write to him any more—or, at least, for a long time, to impress him with my dignity! And I hope it will hurt him very much—expecting a letter to-morrow morning, and the next, and the next, and no letter coming. He'll suffer then with suspense—won't he, that's all!—and I am very glad of it!" Tears of pity for Jude's approaching sufferings at her hands mingled with those which had surged up in pity for herself.

Then the slim little wife of a husband whose person was disagreeable to her, the ethereal, fine-nerved, sensitive girl, quite unfitted by temperament and instinct to fulfil the conditions of the matrimonial relation with Phillotson, possibly with any man, walked fitfully along, and panted, and brought weariness into her eyes by gazing and worrying hopelessly.

Phillotson met her at the arrival station, and, seeing that she was troubled, thought it must be owing to the depressing effect of her aunt's death and funeral. He began telling her of his day's doings, and how his friend Gillingham, a neighboring school-master whom he had not seen for years, had called upon him. While ascending to the town, seated on the top of the omnibus beside him, she said, suddenly, and with an air of self-chastisement, regarding the white road and its bordering bushes of hazel:

"Richard, I let Mr. Fawley hold my hand. I don't know whether you think it wrong."

He, waking apparently from thoughts of far different mould, said, vaguely, "Oh, did you? What did you do that for?"

"I don't know. He wanted to, and I let him."

"I hope it pleased him. I should think it was hardly a novelty."

They lapsed into silence. Had this been a case in the court of an omniscient judge he might have entered on his notes the curious fact that Sue had placed the minor for the major indiscretion, and had not said a word about the kiss.

After tea that evening Phillotson sat balancing the school registers. She remained in an unusually silent, tense, and restless condition, and at last, saying she was tired, went to bed early. When Phillotson arrived upstairs, weary with the drudgery of the attendance-numbers, it was a quarter to twelve o'clock. Entering their chamber, which by day commanded a view of some thirty or forty miles over the Vale of Blackmoor, and even into Outer Wessex, he went to the window, and, pressing his face against the pane, gazed with hard-breathing fixity into the mysterious darkness which now covered the far-reaching scene. He was musing. "I think," he said at last, without turning his head, "that I must get the Committee to change the school-stationer. All the copy-books are sent wrong this time."

There was no reply. Thinking Sue was dozing, he went on:

"And there must be a rearrangement of that ventilator in the class-room. The wind blows down upon my head unmercifully, and gives me the earache."

As the silence seemed more absolute than ordinarily, he turned round. The heavy, gloomy oak wainscot, which extended over the walls up-stairs and down in the dilapidated "Old-Grove's House," and the massive chimney-piece reaching to the ceiling, stood in odd contrast to the new and shining brass bedstead, and the new suite of birch furniture that he had bought for her, the two styles seeming to nod to each other across three centuries upon the shaking floor.

"Soo!" he said (this being the way in which he pronounced her name).

She was not in the bed, though she had apparently been there—the clothes on her side being flung back. Thinking she might have forgotten some kitchen detail, and gone down-stairs for a moment to see to it, he pulled off his coat and idled quietly enough for a few minutes, when, finding she did not come, he went out upon the landing, candle in hand, and said again, "Soo!"

"Yes!" came back to him in her voice, from the distant kitchen quarter.

"What are you doing down there at midnight—tiring yourself out for nothing!"

"I am not sleepy; I am reading; and there is a larger fire here."

He went to bed. Some time in the night he awoke. She was not there, even now. Lighting a candle, he hastily stepped out upon the landing, and again called her name.

She answered "Yes!" as before; but the tones were small and confined, and whence they came he could not at first understand. Under the staircase was a large clothes-closet, without a window; they seemed to come from it. The door was shut, but there was no lock or other fastening. Phillotson, alarmed, went towards it, wondering if she had suddenly become deranged.

"What are you doing in there?" he asked.

"Not to disturb you I came here, as it was so late."

"But there's no bed, is there? And no ventilation! Why, you'll be suffocated if you stay all night!"

"Oh no, I think not. Don't trouble about me."

"But—" Phillotson seized the knob and pulled at the door. She had fastened it inside with a piece of string, which broke at his pull. There being no bedstead, she had flung down some rugs and made a little nest for herself in the very cramped quarters the closet afforded.

When he looked in upon her she sprang out of her lair, trembling.

"You ought not to have pulled open the door!" she cried, excitedly. "It is not becoming in you! Oh, will you go away; please, will you!"

She looked so pitiful and pleading in her white night-gown against the shadowy lumber-hole that he was quite worried. She continued to beseech him not to disturb her.

He said: "I've been kind to you, and given you every liberty; and it is monstrous that you should feel in this way!"

"Yes," said she, weeping. "I know that! It is wrong and wicked of me, I suppose! I am very sorry. But it is not I altogether that am to blame!"

"Who is, then? Am I?"

"No—I don't know! The universe, I suppose—things in general, because they are so horrid and cruel!"

"Well, it is no use talking like that. Making a man's house so unseemly at this time o' night! Eliza will hear, if we don't mind." (He meant the servant.) "Just think if either of the parsons in this town was to see us now! I hate such eccentricities, Sue. There's no order or regularity in your sentiments! . . . But I won't intrude on you further; only I would advise you not to shut the door too tight, or I shall find you stifled to-morrow."

On rising the next morning he immediately looked into the closet, but Sue had already gone down-stairs. There was a little nest where she had lain, and spiders' webs hung overhead. "What must a woman's aversion be when it is stronger than her fear of spiders!" he said, bitterly.

He found her sitting at the breakfast-table, and the meal began almost in silence, the burghers walking past upon the pavement—or rather roadway, pavements being scarce here—which was two or three feet above the level of the parlor floor. They nodded down to the happy couple their morning greetings as they went on.

"Richard," she said, all at once, "would you mind my living away from you?"

"Away from me? Why, that's what you were doing when I married you. What, then, was the meaning of marrying at all?"

"You wouldn't like me any the better for telling you."

"I don't object to know."

"Because I thought I could do nothing else. You had got my promise a long time before that, remember. Then, as time went on, I regretted I had promised you, and was trying to see an honorable way to break it off. But as I couldn't, I became rather reckless and careless about the conventions. Then you know what was said, and how I was turned out of the Training-School you had taken such time and trouble to prepare me for and get me into; and this frightened me, and it seemed then that the one thing I could do would be to let the engagement stand. Of course, I, of all people, ought not to have cared what was said, for it was just what I fancied I never did care for. But I was a coward—as so many women are—and my theoretic unconventionality broke down. If that had not entered into the case it would have been better to have hurt your feelings once for all then, than to marry you and hurt them all my life after. . . . And you were so generous in never giving credit for a moment to the rumor."

"I am bound in honesty to tell you that I weighed its probability, and inquired of your cousin about it."

"Ah!" she said, with pained surprise.

"I didn't doubt you."

"But you inquired!"

"I took his word."

Her eyes had filled. "*He* wouldn't have inquired!" she said. "But you haven't answered me. Will you let me go away? I know how irregular it is of me to ask it—"

"It is irregular."

"But I do ask it! Domestic laws should be made according to temperaments, which should be classified. If people are at all peculiar in character they have to suffer from the very rules that produce comfort in others! . . . Will you let me?"

"But we married—"

"What is the use of thinking of laws and ordinances," she burst out, "if they make you miserable when you know you are committing no sin?"

"But you are committing a sin in not liking me!"

"I *do* like you! But I didn't reflect it would be—that it would be so much more than that. . . . For a man and woman to live on intimate terms when one feels as I do is adultery, in any circumstances, however legal. There—I've said it! . . . Will you let me, Richard?"

"You distress me, Susanna, by such importunity!"

"Why can't we agree to free each other? We made the compact, and surely we can cancel it—not legally, of course, but we can morally, especially as no new interests, in the shape of children, have arisen to be looked after. Then we might be friends, and meet without pain to either. Oh, Richard, be my friend and have pity! We shall both be dead in a few years, and then what will it matter to anybody that you relieved me from constraint for a little while? I dare say you think me eccentric, or super-sensitive, or something absurd. Well—why should I suffer for what I was born to be, if it doesn't hurt other people?"

"But it does—it hurts *me!* And you vowed to love me."

"Yes—that's it! I am in the wrong. I always am! It is as culpable to bind yourself to love always as to believe a creed always, and as silly as to vow always to like a particular food or drink!"

"And do you mean, by living away from me, living by yourself?"

"Well, if you insisted, yes. But I meant living with Jude."

"As his wife?"

"As I choose."

Phillotson writhed.

Sue continued: "She, or he, 'who lets the world, or his own portion of it, choose his plan of life for him, has no need of any other faculty than the ape-like one of imitation.' J. S. Mill's words, those are. Why can't you act upon them? I wish to, always."

"What do I care about J. S. Mill!" moaned he. "I only want to lead a quiet life! Do you mind my saying that I have guessed what never once occurred to me before our marriage—that you were in love, and are in love, with Jude Fawley!"

"You may go on guessing that I am, since you have begun. But do you suppose that if I had been I should have asked you to let me go and live with him?"

The ringing of the school-bell saved Phillotson from the necessity of replying at present to what apparently did not strike him as being such a convincing *argumentum ad verecundiam* as she, in her loss of courage at the last moment, meant it to appear. She was beginning to be so puzzling and unpredicable that he was ready to throw in with her other little peculiarities the extremest request which a wife could make.

They proceeded to the schools that morning as usual, Sue entering the class-room, where he could see the back of her head through the glass partition whenever he turned his eyes that way. As he went on giving and hearing lessons his forehead and eyebrows twitched from concentrated agitation of thought; till at length he tore a scrap from a sheet of scribbling paper and wrote:

"Your request prevents my attending to work at all. I don't know what I am doing! Was it seriously made?"

He folded the piece of paper very small, and gave it to a little boy to take to Sue. The child toddled off into

the class-room. Phillotson saw his wife turn and take the note, and the bend of her pretty head as she read it, her lips slightly crisped, to prevent undue expression under fire of so many young eyes. He could not see her hands, but she changed her position, and soon the child returned, bringing nothing in reply. In a few minutes, however, one of Sue's class appeared, with a little note similar to his own. These words only were pencilled therein:

"I am sincerely sorry to say that it was seriously made."

Phillotson looked more disturbed than before, and the meeting-place of his brows twitched again. In ten minutes he called up the child he had just sent to her, and despatched another missive:

"God knows I don't want to thwart you in any reasonable way. My whole thought is to make you comfortable and happy. But I cannot agree to such a preposterous notion as your going to live with your lover. You would lose everybody's respect and regard; and so should I!"

After an interval a similar part was enacted in the class-room, and an answer came:

"I know you mean my good. But I don't want to be respectable. To produce 'Human development in its richest diversity' (to quote Humboldt) is to my mind far above respectability. No doubt my tastes are low — in your view—hopelessly low! If you won't let me go to him, will you grant me this one request—allow me to live in your house in a separate way?"

To this he returned no answer.

She wrote again:

"I know what you think. But cannot you have pity on me? I beg you to; I implore you to be merciful! I would not ask if I were not almost compelled by what I can't bear! No poor

woman has ever wished more than I that Eve had not fallen, so that (as the primitive Christians believed) some harmless mode of vegetation might have peopled Paradise. But I won't trifle! Be kind to me—even though I have not been kind to you! I will go away, go abroad, anywhere, and never trouble you."

Nearly an hour passed, and then he returned an answer:

"I do not wish to pain you. How well you *know* I don't! Give me a little time. I am disposed to agree to your last request."

One line from her:

"Thank you from my heart, Richard. I do not deserve your kindness."

All day Phillotson bent a dazed regard upon her through the glazed partition; and he felt as lonely as when he had not known her.

But he was as good as his word, and consented to her living apart in the house. At first, when they met at meals, she had seemed more composed under the new arrangement; but the irksomeness of their position worked on her temperament, and the fibres of her nature seemed strained like harp-strings. She talked vaguely and indiscriminately to prevent his talking pertinently.

IV

PHILLOTSON was sitting up late, as was often his custom, trying to get together the materials for his long-neglected hobby of Roman antiquities. For the first time since reviving the subject he felt a return of his old interest in it. He forgot time and place, and when he remembered himself and ascended to rest it was nearly two o'clock.

His preoccupation was such that, though he now slept on the other side of the house, he mechanically went to the room that he and his wife had occupied when he first became a tenant of Old-Grove's Place, which, since his differences with Sue, had been hers exclusively. He entered, and unconsciously began to undress.

There was a cry from the bed, and a quick movement. Before the school-master had realized where he was he perceived Sue, starting up half awake, staring wildly, and springing out upon the floor on the side away from him, which was towards the window. This was somewhat hidden by the canopy of the bedstead, and in a moment he heard her flinging up the sash. Before he had thought that she meant to do more than get air she had mounted upon the sill and leaped out. She disappeared in the darkness, and he heard her fall below.

Phillotson, horrified, ran down-stairs, striking himself sharply against the newel in his haste. Opening the heavy door, he ascended the two or three steps to the level of the ground, and there, on the gravel before him, lay a white heap. Phillotson seized it in his arms, and bringing Sue into the hall seated her on a chair, where

"THERE ON THE GRAVEL LAY A WHITE HEAP"

he gazed at her by the flapping light of the candle, which he had set down in the draught on the bottom stair.

She had certainly not broken her neck. She looked at him with eyes that seemed not to take him in; and though not particularly large in general, they appeared so now. She pressed her side and rubbed her arm, as if conscious of pain; then stood up, averting her face, in evident distress, at his gaze.

"Thank God, you are not killed!—though it's not for want of trying—nor much hurt, I hope?"

Her fall, in fact, had not been a serious one, probably owing to the lowness of the old rooms and to the high level of the ground outside. Beyond a scraped elbow and a blow in the side, she had apparently incurred little harm.

"I was asleep, I think," she began, her pale face still turned away from him, "and something frightened me —a terrible dream—I thought I saw you—" The actual circumstances seemed to come back to her, and she was silent.

Her cloak was hanging at the back of the door, and the wretched Phillotson flung it round her. "Shall I help you up-stairs?" he asked, drearily; for the significance of all this sickened him of himself and of everything.

"No, thank you, Richard. I am very little hurt. I can walk."

"You ought to lock your door," he mechanically said, as if lecturing in school. "Then no one could intrude, even by accident.

"I have tried—it won't lock. All the doors are out of order."

The aspect of things was not improved by her admission. She ascended the staircase slowly, the waving light of the candle shining on her. Phillotson did not approach her, or attempt to ascend himself till he heard her enter her room. Then he fastened up the front door, and,

returning, sat down on the lower stairs, holding the newel with one hand, and bowing his face into the other. Thus he remained for a long, long time—a pitiable object enough to one who had seen him; till, raising his head, and sighing a sigh which seemed to say that the business of his life must be carried on, whether he had a wife or no, he took the candle and went up-stairs to his lonely room on the other side of the landing.

No further incident touching the matter between them occurred till the following evening, when, immediately school was over, Phillotson walked out of Shaston, saying he required no tea, and not informing Sue where he was going. He descended from the town level by a steep road in a northwesterly direction, and continued to move downward till the soil changed from its white dryness to a tough brown clay. He was now on the low alluvial beds,

> "Where Duncliffe is the traveller's mark,
> And cloty Stour's a-rolling."

More than once he looked back in the increasing obscurity of evening. Against the sky was Shaston, dimly visible

> "On the gray-topp'd height
> Of Paladore, as pale day wore
> Away . . ."*

The new-lit lights from its windows burned with a steady shine as if watching him, one of which windows was his own. Above it he could just discern the pinnacled tower of Trinity Church. The air down here, tempered by the thick damp bed of tenacious clay, was not as it had been above, but soft and relaxing, so that when he had walked a mile or two he was obliged to wipe his face with his handkerchief.

* William Barnes.

Leaving Duncliffe Hill on the left, he proceeded without hesitation through the shade, as a man goes on, night or day, in a district over which he has played as a boy. He had walked altogether about four and a half miles when he crossed the tributary of the Stour, and reached Leddenton—a little town of three or four thousand inhabitants—where he went on to the boys' school, and knocked at the door of the master's residence.

A boy pupil-teacher opened it, and to Phillotson's inquiry if Mr. Gillingham was at home, replied that he was, going at once off to his own house, and leaving Phillotson to find his way in as he could. He discovered his friend putting away some books from which he had been giving evening lessons. The light of the paraffin lamp fell on Phillotson's face—pale and wretched by contrast with his friend's, who had a cool, practical look. They had been schoolmates in boyhood, and fellow-students at Wintoncester Training-College many years before this time.

"Glad to see you, Dick! But you don't look well! Nothing the matter?"

Phillotson advanced without replying, and Gillingham closed the cupboard and pulled up beside his visitor.

"Why, you haven't been here—let me see—since you were married? I called, you know, but you were out; and, upon my word, it is such a climb after dark that I have been waiting till the days are longer before lumpering up again. I am glad you didn't wait, however."

Though well-trained and even proficient masters, they occasionally used a dialect-word of their boyhood to each other in private.

"I've come, George, to explain to you my reasons for taking a step that I am about to take, so that you, at least, will understand my motives if other people question them anywhen, as they may—indeed, certainly will. . . . But anything is better than the present condition of things. God forbid that you should ever have such an experience as mine!"

"Sit down. You don't mean—anything wrong between you and Mrs. Phillotson?"

"I do. . . . My wretched state is that I've a wife I love, who not only does not love me, but—but— Well, I won't say. I know her feeling. I should prefer hatred from her!"

"'S-sh!"

"And the sad part of it is that she is not so much to blame as I. She was a pupil-teacher under me, as you know, and I took advantage of her inexperience, and toled her out for walks, and got her to agree to a long engagement before she well knew her own mind. Afterwards she saw somebody else, but she blindly fulfilled her engagement."

"Loving the other?"

"Yes; with a curious tender solicitude seemingly, though her exact feeling for him is a riddle to me—and to him, too, I think—possibly to herself. She is one of the oddest creatures I ever met. However, I have been struck with these two facts; the extraordinary sympathy, or similarity, between the pair. (He is her cousin, which perhaps accounts for some of it. They seem to be one person split in two!) And with her unconquerable aversion to myself as a husband, even though she may like me as a friend, 'tis too much to bear longer. She has conscientiously struggled against it, but to no purpose. I cannot bear it — I cannot! I can't answer her arguments — she has read ten times as much as I. Her intellect sparkles like diamonds, while mine smoulders like brown paper. . . . She's one too many for me!"

"She'll get over it, good-now?"

"Never! It is—but I won't go into it—there are reasons why she never will. At last she calmly and firmly asked if she might leave me and go to him. The climax came last night, when, owing to my entering her room by accident, she jumped out of window—so strong was her dread of me! She pretended it was a dream, but that

was to soothe me. Now when a woman jumps out of window without caring whether she breaks her neck or no, she's not to be mistaken; and this being the case, I have come to a conclusion: that it is wrong to so torture a fellow-creature any longer; and I won't be the inhuman wretch to do it, cost what it may!"

"What—you'll let her go? And with her lover?"

"Whom with is her matter. I shall let her go; with him certainly, if she wishes. I know I may be wrong—I know I can't logically, or religiously, defend my concession to such a wish of hers, or harmonize it with the doctrines I was brought up in. Only I know one thing: something within me tells me I am doing wrong in refusing her. I, like other men, profess to hold that if a husband gets such a so-called preposterous request from his wife, the only course that can possibly be regarded as right and proper and honorable in him is to refuse it, and put her virtuously under lock and key, and murder her lover perhaps. But is that essentially right and proper and honorable, or is it contemptibly mean and selfish? I don't profess to decide. I simply am going to act by instinct, and let principles take care of themselves. If a person who has blindly walked into a quagmire cries for help, I am inclined to give it, if possible."

"But—you see, there's the question of neighbors and society—what will happen if everybody—"

"Oh, I am not going to be a philosopher any longer! I only see what's under my eyes."

"Well, I don't agree with your instinct, Dick," said Gillingham, gravely. "I am quite amazed, to tell the truth, that such a sedate, plodding fellow as you should have entertained such a craze for a moment. You said when I called that she was puzzling and peculiar; I think you are!"

"Have you ever stood before a woman whom you know to be intrinsically a good woman, while she has pleaded

for release—been the man she has knelt to and implored indulgence of?"

"I am thankful to say I haven't."

"Then I don't think you are in a position to give an opinion. I have been that man, and it makes all the difference in the world, if one has any manliness or chivalry in him. I had not the remotest idea—living apart from women, as I have done, for so many years—that merely taking a woman to church and putting a ring upon her finger could by any possibility involve one in such a daily, continuous tragedy as that now shared by her and me."

"Well, I could admit some excuse for letting her leave you, provided she kept to herself. But to go attended by a cavalier—that makes a difference."

"Not a bit. Suppose, as I believe, she would rather endure her present misery than be made to promise to keep apart from him? All that is a question for herself. It is not the same thing at all as the treachery of living on with a husband and playing him false. . . . However, she has not distinctly implied living with him as wife, though I think she means to. . . . And, to the best of my understanding, it is not an ignoble, merely animal, feeling between the two; that is the worst of it, because it makes me think their affection will be enduring. I did not mean to confess to you that in the first jealous weeks of my marriage, before I had come to my right mind, I hid myself in the school one evening when they were together there, and I heard what they said. I am ashamed of it now, though I suppose I was only exercising a legal right. I found from their manner that an extraordinary affinity, or sympathy, entered into their attachment, which somehow took away all flavor of grossness. Their supreme desire is to be together—to share each other's emotions, and fancies, and dreams."

"Platonic!"

"Well, no. Shelleyan would be nearer to it. They re-

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mind me of Laon and Cynthia. Also of Paul and Virginia a little. The more I reflect, the more *entirely* I am on their side!"

"But if people did as you want to do, there'd be a general domestic disintegration. The family would no longer be the social unit."

"Yes, I am all abroad, I suppose," said Phillotson, sadly. "I was never a very bright reasoner, you remember. . . . And yet, I don't see why the woman and the children should not be the unit without the man."

"By the Lord Harry!—Matriarchy! . . . Does *she* say all this too?"

"Oh no. She little thinks I have out-Sued Sue in this—all in the last twelve hours!"

"It will upset all received opinion hereabout. Good God! what will Shaston say?"

"I don't say that it won't. I don't know—I don't know! . . . As I say, I am only a feeler, not a reasoner."

"Now," said Gillingham, "let us take it quietly, and have something to drink over it." He went under the stairs and produced a bottle of cider-wine, of which they drank a rummer each. "I think you are rafted, and not yourself," he continued. "Do go back and make up your mind to put up with a few whims. But keep her. I hear on all sides that she's a charming young thing."

"Ah, yes! That's the bitterness of it! Well, I won't stay. I have a long walk before me."

Gillingham accompanied his friend a mile on his way, and at parting expressed his hope that this consultation, singular as its subject was, would be the renewal of their old comradeship. "Stick to her!" were his last words, flung into the darkness after Phillotson; from which his friend answered, "Aye, aye!"

But when Phillotson was alone under the clouds of night, and no sound was audible but that of the purling tributaries of the Stour, he said, "So, Gillingham, my friend, you had no stronger arguments against it than those!"

"I think she ought to be smacked and brought to her senses—that's what I think!" murmured Gillingham, as he walked back alone.

The next morning came, and at breakfast Phillotson told Sue:

"You may go—with whom you will. I absolutely and unconditionally agree."

Having once come to this conclusion, it seemed to Phillotson more and more indubitably the true one. His mild serenity at the sense that he was doing his duty by a woman who was at his mercy almost overpowered his grief at relinquishing her.

Some days passed, and the evening of their last meal together was come—a cloudy evening with wind—which, indeed, was very seldom absent in this elevated place. How permanently it was imprinted upon his vision; that look of her as she glided into the parlor to tea, a slim, flexible figure; a face, strained from its roundness, and marked by the pallors of restless days and nights, suggesting tragic possibilities quite at variance with her times of buoyancy; a trying of this morsel and that, and an inability to eat either. Her nervous manner, begotten of a fear lest he should be injured by her course, might have been interpreted by a stranger as displeasure that Phillotson intruded his presence on her for the few brief minutes that remained.

"You had better have a slice of ham, or an egg, or something with your tea? You can't travel on a mouthful of bread-and-butter."

She took the slice he helped her to; and they discussed, as they sat, trivial questions of housekeeping, such as where he would find the key of this or that cupboard, what little bills were paid, and what not.

"I am a bachelor by nature, as you know, Sue," he said, in a heroic attempt to put her at her ease. "So that being without a wife will not really be irksome to me, as it might be to other men who have had one a little while.

I have, too, this grand hobby in my head of writing 'The Roman Antiquities of Wessex,' which will occupy all my spare hours."

"If you will send me some of the manuscript to copy at any time, as you used to, I will do it with so much pleasure!" she said, with amenable gentleness; "I should much like to be some help to you still—as a f-f-friend."

Phillotson mused, and said: "No, I think we ought to be really separate, if we are to be at all. And for this reason, that I don't wish to ask you any questions, and particularly wish you not to give me information as to your movements, or even your address. . . . Now, what money do you want? You must have some, you know."

"Oh, of course, Richard, I couldn't think of having any of *your* money to go away from you with! I don't want any either. I have enough of my own to last me for a long while, and Jude will let me have—"

"I would rather not know anything about him, if you don't mind. You are free, absolutely; and your course is your own."

"Very well. But I'll just say that I have packed only a change or two of my own personal clothing, and one or two little things besides that are my very own. I wish you would look into my trunk before it is closed. Besides that, I have only a small parcel that will go into Jude's portmanteau."

"Of course I shall do no such thing as examine your luggage! I wish you would take three-quarters of the household furniture. I don't want to be bothered with it. I have a sort of affection for a little of it that belonged to my poor mother and father. But the rest you are welcome to whenever you like to send for it."

"That I shall never do."

"You go by the six-thirty train, don't you? It is now a quarter to six."

"You. . . . You don't seem very sorry I am going, Richard?"

"Oh no—perhaps not."

"I like you much for how you have behaved. It is a curious thing that directly I have begun to regard you as not my husband, but as my old teacher, I like you. I won't be so affected as to say I love you, because you know I don't, except as a friend. But you do seem that to me."

Sue was for a few moments a little tearful at these reflections, and then the station omnibus came round to take her up. Phillotson saw her things put on the top, handed her in, and was obliged to make an appearance of kissing her as he wished her good-bye, though she shrank even from that. From the cheerful manner in which they parted the omnibus-man had no other idea than that she was going for a short visit.

When Phillotson got back into the house he went upstairs and opened the window in the direction the omnibus had taken. Soon the noise of its wheels died away. He came down then, his face compressed like that of one bearing pain; he put on his hat and went out, following by the same route for nearly a mile. Suddenly turning round, he came home.

He had no sooner entered than the voice of his friend Gillingham greeted him from the front room.

"I could make nobody hear; so, finding your door open, I walked in and made myself comfortable. I said I would call, you remember."

"Yes. I am much obliged to you, Gillingham, particularly for coming to-night."

"How is Mrs.—"

"She is quite well. She is gone—just gone. That's her teacup that she drank out of only an hour ago. And that's the plate she—"

Phillotson's throat got choked up, and he could not go on. He turned and pushed the tea-things aside.

"Have you had any tea, by-the-bye?" he asked, presently, in a renewed voice.

"No—yes—never mind," said Gillingham, preoccupied. "Gone, you say she is?"

"Yes. . . . I would have died for her, but I wouldn't be cruel to her in the name of the law. She is, as I understand, gone to join her lover. What they are going to do I cannot say. Whatever it may be, she has my full consent to."

There was a stability, a ballast, in Phillotson's pronouncement which restrained his friend's comment. "Shall I—leave you?" he asked.

"No, no. It is a mercy to me that you have come. I have some articles to arrange and clear away. Would you help me?"

Gillingham assented; and having gone to the upper rooms the school-master opened drawers, and began taking out all Sue's things that she had left behind, and laying them in a large box. "She wouldn't take all I wanted her to," he continued. "But when I made up my mind to her going to live in her own way, I did make up my mind."

"Some men would have stopped at an agreement to separate."

"I've gone into all that, and don't wish to argue it. I was, and am, the most old-fashioned man in the world on the question of marriage—in fact, I had never thought critically about its ethics at all. But certain facts stared me in the face, and I couldn't go against them."

They went on with the packing silently. When it was done, Phillotson closed the box and turned the key.

"There!" he said. "To adorn her in somebody's eyes; never again in mine!"

V

FOUR-AND-TWENTY hours before this time Sue had written the following note to Jude:

"It is as I told you, and I am leaving to-morrow evening. Richard and I thought it could be done with less obtrusiveness after dark. I feel rather frightened, and therefore ask you to be sure you are on the platform to meet me by the train arriving at a quarter to nine. I know you will, of course, dear Jude, but I feel so timid that I can't help begging you to be punctual. He has been so *very* kind to me through it all!

"Now to our meeting! S."

As she was carried by the omnibus farther and farther down from the mountain town—the single passenger that evening—she regarded the receding road with a sad face. But no hesitation was apparent therein.

The up-train by which she was departing stopped by signal only. To Sue it seemed strange that such a powerful organization as a railway-train should be brought to a standstill on purpose for her—a fugitive from her lawful home.

The twenty minutes' journey drew towards its close, and Sue began gathering her things together to alight. At the moment that the train came to a standstill by the Melchester platform a hand was laid on the door, and she beheld Jude. He entered the compartment promptly. He had a black bag in his hand, and was dressed in the dark suit he wore on Sundays and in the evening after work. Altogether he looked a very handsome young fellow, his ardent affection for her burning in his eyes.

"Oh, Jude!" She clasped his hand with both hers, and her tense state caused her to simmer over in a little succession of dry sobs. "I—I am so glad! I get out here?"

"No. I get in, dear one! I've packed. Besides this bag I've only a big box, which is labelled."

"But don't I get out? Aren't we going to stay here?"

"We couldn't possibly, don't you see. We are known here—I, at any rate, am well known. I've booked for Aldbrickham; and here's your ticket for the same place, as you have only one to here."

"I thought we should have stayed here," she repeated.

"It wouldn't have done at all."

"Ah!—perhaps not."

"There wasn't time for me to write and say the place I had decided on. Aldbrickham is a much bigger town —sixty or seventy thousand inhabitants—and nobody knows anything about us there."

"And you have given up your Cathedral work here?"

"Yes. It was rather sudden—your message coming unexpectedly. Strictly, I might have been made to finish out the week. But I pleaded urgency, and I was let off. I would have deserted any day at your command, dear Sue. I have deserted more than that for you!"

"I fear I am doing you a lot of harm. Ruining your prospects of the Church; ruining your progress in your trade; everything!"

"The Church is no more to me. Let it lie. *I* am not to be one of

> "'The soldier-saints who, row on row,
> Burn upward each to his point of bliss,'"

if any such there be! My point of bliss is not upward, but here."

"Oh, I seem so bad—upsetting men's courses like this!" said she, taking up in her voice the emotion that had begun in his. But she recovered her equanimity by the time they had travelled a dozen miles.

"He has been so good in letting me go," she resumed. "And here's a note I found on my dressing-table, addressed to you."

"Yes. He's not an unworthy fellow," said Jude, glancing at the note. "And I am ashamed of myself for hating him because he married you."

"According to the rule of women's whims, I suppose I ought to suddenly love him, because he has let me go so generously and unexpectedly," she answered, smiling. "But I am so cold, or devoid of gratitude, or so something, that even this generosity hasn't made me love him, or repent, or want to stay with him as his wife; although I do feel I like his large-mindedness, and respect him more than ever."

"It may not work so well for us as if he had been less kind, and you had run away against his will," murmured Jude.

"That I *never* would have done."

Jude's eyes rested musingly on her face. Then he suddenly kissed her, and was going to kiss her again. "No —only once now—please, Jude!"

"That's rather cruel," he answered, but acquiesced. "Such a strange thing has happened to me," Jude continued, after a silence. "Arabella has actually written to ask me to get a divorce from her—in kindness to her, she says. She wants to honestly and legally marry that man she has already married virtually, and begs me to enable her to do it."

"What have you done?"

"I have agreed. I thought at first I couldn't do it without getting her into trouble about that second marriage, and I don't want to injure her in any way. Perhaps she's no worse than I am, after all! But nobody knows about it over here, and I find it will not be a difficult proceeding at all. If she wants to start afresh, I have only too obvious reasons for not hindering her."

"Then you'll be free?"

"Yes, I shall be free."

"Where are we booked for?" she asked, with the discontinuity that marked her to-night.

"Aldbrickham, as I said."

"But it will be very late when we get there?"

"Yes. I thought of that, and I wired for a room for us at the Temperance Hotel there."

"One?"

"Yes—one."

She looked at him. "Oh, Jude!" Sue bent her forehead against the corner of the compartment. "I thought you might do it, and that I was deceiving you. But I didn't mean that!"

In the pause which followed, Jude's eyes fixed themselves with a stultified expression on the opposite seat.

"Well!" he said. . . . "Well!"

He remained in silence; but seeing how discomfited he was, she put her face against his cheek, murmuring, "Don't be vexed, dear!"

"Oh—there's no harm done," he said. "But—I understood it like that. . . . Is this a sudden change of mind?"

"You have no right to ask me such a question, and I sha'n't answer!" she said, smiling.

"My dear one, your happiness is more to me than anything—although we seem to verge on quarrelling so often—and your will is law to me. I am something more than a mere—selfish fellow, I hope. Have it as you wish!" On reflection his brow showed perplexity. "But perhaps it is that you don't love me—not that you have become conventional. Much as, under your teaching, I hate convention, I hope it *is* that, not the other terrible alternative!"

Even at this obvious moment for candor Sue could not be quite candid as to the state of that mystery, her heart. "Put it down to my timidity," she said, with hurried evasiveness; "to a woman's natural timidity when the crisis comes. I *may* feel as well as you that I have a perfect right to live with you as you thought—from this moment.

I *may* hold the opinion that, in a proper state of society, the father of a woman's child will be as much a private matter of hers as the cut of her under-linen, on whom nobody will have any right to conjecture. But partly, perhaps, because it is by his generosity that I am now free, I would rather not be other than a little rigid. If there had been a rope ladder, and he had run after us with pistols, it would have seemed different, and I may have acted otherwise. But don't press me and criticise me, Jude! Assume that I haven't the courage of my opinions. I know I am a poor, miserable creature. My nature is not so passionate as yours!"

He repeated simply: "I thought — what I naturally thought. But if we are not lovers, we are not. Phillotson thought so, I am sure. See, here is what he has written to me." He opened the letter she had brought, and read:

"I make only one condition—that you are tender and kind to her. I know you love her. But even love may be cruel at times. You are made for each other: it is obvious, palpable, to any unbiassed third person. You were all along 'the shadowy third' in my short life with her. I repeat, take care of Sue."

"He's a good fellow, isn't he!" she said, with latent tears. On reconsideration she added, "He was very resigned to letting me go—too resigned almost. I never was so near being in love with him as when he made such thoughtful arrangements for my being comfortable on my journey, and offering to provide money. Yet I was not. If I loved him ever so little as a wife, I'd go back to him even now."

"But you don't, do you?"

"It is true—oh, so terribly true!—I don't."

"Nor me neither, I half fear," he said, pettishly. "Nor anybody, perhaps. Sue, sometimes, when I am vexed with you, I think you are incapable of real love."

"That's not good and loyal of you," she said; and

drawing away from him as far as she could, looked severely out into the darkness. She presently added, in hurt tones, turning round: "My liking for you is not as some women's perhaps. But it is a delight in being with you, of a supremely delicate kind, and I don't want to go further and risk it by—an attempt to intensify it! I quite realized that, as woman with man, it was a risk to come. But, as *me* with *you*, I resolved to trust you to set my wishes above your gratification. Don't discuss it further, dear Jude!"

"Of course, if it would make you reproach yourself . . . but you do like me very much, Sue?—say you do! Say that you do a quarter, a tenth, as much as I do you, and I'll be content!"

"I've let you kiss me, and that tells enough."

"Just once or so!"

"Well—don't be a greedy boy."

He leaned back, and did not look at her for a long time. That episode in her past history of which she had told him—of the poor Christminster graduate whom she had handled thus—returned to Jude's mind, and he saw himself as a possible second in such a torturing destiny.

"This is a queer elopement!" he murmured. "Perhaps you are making a cat's-paw of me with Phillotson all this time. Upon my word, it almost seems so—to see you sitting up there so prim!"

"Now, you mustn't be angry—I won't let you!" she coaxed, turning and moving nearer to him. "You did kiss me just now, you know, and I didn't dislike you to, very much, Jude. Only I don't want to let you do it again, just yet—considering how we are circumstanced, don't you see!"

He could never resist her when she pleaded (as she well knew). And they sat side by side with joined hands, till she aroused herself at some thought.

"I can't possibly go to that Temperance Inn, after your telegraphing that message!"

"Why not?"

"You can see well enough!"

"Very well; there'll be some other one open, no doubt. I have sometimes thought, since your marrying Phillotson because of a stupid scandal, that under the affectation of independent views you are as enslaved to the social code as any woman I know!"

"Not mentally. But I haven't the courage of my views, as I said before. I didn't marry him altogether because of the scandal. But sometimes a woman's *love of being loved* gets the better of her conscience, and though she is agonized at the thought of treating a man cruelly, she encourages him to love her while she doesn't love him at all. Then, when she sees him suffering, her remorse sets in, and she does what she can to repair the wrong."

"You simply mean that you flirted outrageously with him, poor old chap, and then repented, and, to make reparation, married him, though you tortured yourself to death by doing it?"

"Well—if you will put it brutally!—it was a little like that—that and the scandal together—and your concealing from me what you ought to have told me before!"

He could see that she was distressed and tearful at his criticisms, and soothed her, saying, "There, dear, don't mind! Crucify me, if you will! You know you are all the world to me, whatever you do!"

"I am very bad and unprincipled—I know you think that!" she said, trying to blink away her tears.

"I think and know you are my dear Sue, from whom neither length nor breadth, nor things present nor things to come, can divide me!"

Though so sophisticated in many things, she was such a child in others that this satisfied her, and they reached the end of their journey on the best of terms. It was about ten o'clock when they arrived at Aldbrickham, the county town of North Wessex. As she would not go to

the Temperance Hotel because of the form of his telegram, Jude inquired for another; and a youth who volunteered to find one wheeled their luggage to a place near at hand, which proved to be the inn at which Jude had stayed with Arabella on that one occasion of their meeting after their division for years.

Owing, however, to their now entering it by another door, and to his preoccupation, he did not at first recognize the place. When they had engaged their respective rooms they went down to a late supper. During Jude's temporary absence the waiting-maid spoke to Sue.

"I think, ma'am, I remember your relation, or friend, or whatever he is, coming here once before—late, just like this, with his wife—a lady, at any rate, that wasn't you by no manner of means—jest as med be with you now."

"Oh, do you?" said Sue, with a certain sickness of heart. "Though I think you must be mistaken! How long ago was it?"

"About a month or two. A handsome, full-figured woman."

When Jude came back and sat down to supper, Sue seemed moping and miserable. "Jude," she said to him, plaintively, at their parting that night upon the landing, "it is not so nice and pleasant as it used to be with us! I don't like it here—I can't bear the place! And I don't like you so well as I did!"

"How fidgeted you seem, dear! Why do you change like this?"

"Because it was cruel to bring me here!"

"Why?"

"You were lately here with Arabella. There, now I have said it!"

"Dear me, why—" said Jude, looking round him. "Yes, it is the same! I really didn't know it, Sue. Well—it is not cruel, since we have come as we have—two relations staying together."

"How long ago was it you were here? Tell me! tell me!"

"The day before I met you in Christminster, when we went back to Marygreen together. I told you I had met her."

"Yes, you said you had met her, but you didn't tell me all. Your story was that you had met as estranged people, who were not husband and wife at all in Heaven's sight—not that you had made it up with her."

"We didn't make it up," he said, sadly. "I can't explain, Sue."

"You've been false to me; you, my last hope! And I shall never forget it—never!"

"But by your own wish, dear Sue, we are only to be friends, not lovers! It is so very inconsistent of you to—"

"Friends can be jealous!"

"I don't see that. You concede nothing to me, and I have to concede everything to you. After all, you were on good terms with your husband at that time."

"No, I wasn't, Jude. Oh, how can you think so! And you have taken me in, even if you didn't intend to." She was so mortified that he was obliged to take her into her room and close the door, lest the people should hear. "Was it this room? Yes, it was—I see by your look it was! I won't have it for mine. Oh, it was treacherous of you to have her again! *I* jumped out of the window!"

"But, Sue, she was, after all, my legal wife, if not—"

Slipping down on her knees Sue buried her face in the bed and wept.

"I never knew such an unreasonable—such a dog-in-the-manger feeling," said Jude. "I am not to approach you, nor anybody else!"

"Oh, don't you *understand* my feeling? *Why* don't you? Why are you so gross? *I* jumped out of the window!"

"Jumped out of window?"

"I can't explain."

It was true that he did not understand her feeling very well. But he did a little, and began to love her none the less.

"I—I thought you cared for nobody—desired nobody in the world but me at that time—and ever since!" continued Sue.

"It is true. I did not, and don't now!" said Jude, as distressed as she.

"But you must have thought much of her! Or—"

"No, I need not; you don't understand me either—women never do! Why should you get into such a tantrum about nothing?"

Looking up from the quilt she replied, provokingly, "If it hadn't been for that, perhaps I would have gone on to the Temperance Hotel, after all, as you proposed; for I was beginning to think I did belong to you!"

"Oh, it is of no consequence," said Jude, distantly.

"I thought, of course, that she had never been really your wife since she left you of her own accord years and years ago. My sense of it was, that a parting such as yours from her, and mine from him, ended the marriage."

"I can't say more without speaking against her, and I don't want to do that," said he. "Yet I must tell you one thing, which would settle the matter in any case. She has married another man—really married him! I knew nothing about it till after the visit we made here."

"Married another? . . . It is a crime—as the world treats it, but does not believe."

"There; now you are yourself again. Yes, it is a crime—as you don't hold, but would fearfully concede. But I shall never inform against her. And it is evidently a prick of conscience in her that has led her to urge me to get a divorce, that she may re-marry this man legally. So, you perceive, I shall not be likely to see her again."

"And you didn't really know anything of this when you saw her?" said Sue, more gently, as she rose.

"I did not. Considering all things, I don't think you ought to be angry, darling!"

"I am not. But I sha'n't go to the Temperance Hotel!"

He laughed. "Never mind," he said. "So that I am near you, I am comparatively happy. It is more than this earthly wretch called Me deserves—you spirit, you disembodied creature, you dear, sweet, tantalizing phantom—hardly flesh at all; so that when I put my arms round you, I almost expect them to pass through you as through air! Forgive me for being gross, as you call it! Remember that our calling cousins when really strangers was a snare. The enmity of our parents gave a piquancy to you in my eyes that was intenser even than the novelty of ordinary new acquaintance."

"Say those pretty lines, then, from Shelley's 'Epipsychidion' as if they meant me," she solicited, slanting up closer to him as they stood. "Don't you know them?"

"I know hardly any poetry," he replied, mournfully.

"Don't you? These are some of them:

> "'There was a Being whom my spirit oft
> Met on its visioned wanderings far aloft.
> . . . . . .
> A seraph of Heaven, too gentle to be human,
> Veiling beneath that radiant form of woman . . .'"

"Oh, it is too flattering, so I won't go on! But say it's me!—say it's me!"

"It *is* you, dear; exactly like you!"

"Now I forgive you! And you shall kiss me just once there—not very long." She put the tip of her finger gingerly to her cheek, and he did as commanded. "You do care for me very much, don't you, in spite of my not—you know?"

"Yes, sweet!" he said, with a sigh, and bade her goodnight.

VI

In returning to his native town of Shaston as school-master Phillotson had won the interest and awakened the memories of the inhabitants, who, though they did not honor him for his miscellaneous acquirements as he would have been honored elsewhere, retained for him a sincere regard. When, shortly after his arrival, he brought home a pretty wife—awkwardly pretty for him, if he did not take care, they said—they were glad to have her settle among them.

For some time after her flight from that home Sue's absence did not excite comment. Her place as monitor in the school was taken by another young woman within a few days of her vacating it, which substitution also passed without remark, Sue's services having been of a provisional nature only. When, however, a month had passed, and Phillotson casually admitted to acquaintance that he did not know where his wife was staying, curiosity began to be aroused; till, jumping to conclusions, people ventured to affirm that Sue had played him false, and run away from him. The school-master's growing languor and listlessness over his work gave countenance to the idea.

Though Phillotson had held his tongue as long as he could, except to his friend Gillingham, his honesty and directness would not allow him to do so when misapprehensions as to Sue's conduct spread abroad. On a Monday morning the chairman of the School Committee called, and, after attending to the business of the school, drew Phillotson aside out of earshot of the children.

"You'll excuse my asking, Phillotson, since everybody is talking of it: is this true as to your domestic affairs—that your wife's going away was on no visit, but a secret elopement with a lover? If so, I condole with you."

"Don't," said Phillotson. "There was no secret about it."

"She has gone to visit friends?"

"No."

"Then what has happened?"

"She has gone away under circumstances that usually call for condolence with the husband. But I gave my consent."

The chairman looked as if he had not apprehended the remark.

"What I say is quite true," Phillotson continued, testily. "She asked leave to go away with her lover, and I let her. Why shouldn't I? A woman of full age, it was a question for her own conscience—not for me. I was not her jailer. I can't explain any further. I don't wish to be questioned."

The children observed that much seriousness marked the faces of the two men, and went home and told their parents that something new had happened about Mrs. Phillotson. Then Phillotson's little maid-servant, who was a school-girl just out of her standards, said that Mr. Phillotson had helped in his wife's packing, had offered her what money she required, and had written a friendly letter to her young man, telling him to take care of her. The chairman of committee thought the matter over, and talked to the other managers of the school, till a request came to Phillotson to meet them privately. The meeting lasted a long time, and at the end the schoolmaster came home, looking, as usual, pale and worn. Gillingham was sitting in his house awaiting him.

"Well, it is as you said," observed Phillotson, flinging himself down wearily in a chair. "They have requested me to send in my resignation on account of my scan-

dalous conduct in giving my tortured wife her liberty—or, as they call it, condoning her adultery. But I sha'n't resign."

"I think I would."

"I won't. It is no business of theirs. It doesn't affect me in my public capacity at all. They may expel me, if they like."

"If you make a fuss it will get into the papers, and you'll never get appointed to another school. You see, they have to consider what you did as done by a teacher of youth—and its effects as such upon the morals of the town; and, to ordinary opinion, your position is indefensible. You must let me say that."

To this good advice, however, Phillotson would not listen.

"I don't care," he said. "I don't go unless I am turned out. And for this reason: that by resigning I acknowledge I have acted wrongly by her, when I am more and more convinced every day that in the sight of Heaven, and by all natural, straightforward humanity, I have acted rightly."

Gillingham saw that his rather headstrong friend would not be able to maintain such a position as this; but he said nothing further, and, in due time—indeed, in a quarter of an hour—the formal letter of dismissal arrived, the managers having remained behind to write it after Phillotson's withdrawal. The latter replied that he should not accept dismissal, and called a public meeting, which he attended, although he looked so weak and ill that his friend implored him to stay at home. When he stood up to give his reasons for contesting the decision of the managers he advanced them firmly, as he had done to his friend, and contended, moreover, that the matter was a domestic theory which did not concern them. This they over-ruled, insisting that the private eccentricities of a teacher came quite within their sphere of control, as it touched the morals of those he taught. Phillotson re-

plied that he did not see how an act of Christian charity could injure morals.

All the respectable inhabitants and well-to-do fellow-natives of the town were against Phillotson to a man. But, somewhat to his surprise, some dozen champions rose up in his defence as from the ground.

It has been stated that Shaston was the anchorage of a curious and interesting group of itinerants, who frequented the numerous fairs and markets held up and down Wessex during the summer and autumn months. Although Phillotson had never spoken to one of these gentlemen, they now nobly led the forlorn hope in his defence. The body included two cheap-jacks, a shooting-gallery proprietor, and the ladies who loaded the guns, a pair of boxing-masters, a steam-roundabout manager, two travelling broom-makers, who called themselves widows, a gingerbread-stall keeper, a swing-boat owner, and a "test-your-strength" man.

This generous phalanx of supporters, and a few others of independent judgment, whose own domestic experiences had been not without vicissitude, came up and warmly shook hands with Phillotson; after which they expressed their thoughts so strongly to the meeting that issue was joined, the result being a general scuffle, wherein a blackboard was split, three panes of the school-windows were broken, an inkbottle spilled over a town-councillor's shirt-front, and some black eyes and bleeding noses given, one of which, to everybody's horror, was the venerable incumbent's, owing to the zeal of an emancipated chimney-sweep, who took the side of Phillotson's party. When Phillotson saw the blood running down the rector's face he deplored almost in groans the untoward and degrading circumstances, regretted that he had not resigned when called upon, and went home so ill that next morning he could not leave his bed.

The farcical yet melancholy event was the beginning of a serious illness for him; and he lay in his lonely bed

in the pathetic state of mind of a middle-aged man who perceives at length that his life, intellectual and domestic, is tending to failure and gloom. Gillingham came to see him in the evenings, and on one occasion mentioned Sue's name.

"She doesn't care anything about me!" said Phillotson. "Why should she?"

"She doesn't know you are ill."

"So much the better for both of us."

"Where are her lover and she living?"

"At Melchester, I suppose — at least, he was living there some time ago."

When Gillingham reached home he sat and reflected, and at last wrote an anonymous line to Sue, on the bare chance of its reaching her, the letter being enclosed in an envelope addressed to Jude at the diocesan capital. Arriving at that place, it was forwarded to Marygreen in North Wessex, and thence to Aldbrickham by the only person who knew his present address—the widow who had nursed his aunt.

Three days later, in the evening, when the sun was going down in splendor over the lowlands of Blackmoor, and making the Shaston windows like tongues of fire to the eyes of the rustics in that Vale, the sick man fancied that he heard somebody come to the house, and a few minutes after there was a tap at the bedroom door. Phillotson did not speak; the door was hesitatingly opened, and there entered—Sue.

She was in light spring clothing, and her advent seemed ghostly—like the flitting in of a moth. He turned his eyes upon her, and flushed, but appeared to check his primary impulse to speak.

"I have no business here," she said, turning her frightened face to him. "But I heard you were ill--very ill; and—and as I know that you recognize other feelings between man and woman than physical love, I have come."

"I am not very ill, my dear friend. Only unwell."

"I didn't know that; and I am afraid that only a severe illness would have justified my coming!"

"Yes. . . . yes. And I almost wish you had not come! It is a little too soon—that's all I mean. Still, let us make the best of it. You haven't heard about the school, I suppose?"

"No; what about it?"

"Only that I am going away from here to another place. The managers and I don't agree, and we are going to part—that's all."

Sue did not for a moment, either now or later, suspect what troubles had resulted to him from letting her go; it never once seemed to cross her mind, and she had received no news whatever from Shaston. They talked on slight and ephemeral subjects, and when his tea was brought up he told the amazed little servant that a cup was to be set for Sue. That young person was much more interested in their history than they supposed, and as she descended the stairs she lifted her eyes and hands in grotesque amazement. While they sipped, Sue went to the window and thoughtfully said, "It is such a beautiful sunset, Richard."

"They are mostly beautiful from here, owing to the rays crossing the mist of the Vale. But I lose them all, as they don't shine into this gloomy corner where I lie."

"Wouldn't you like to see this particular one? It is like heaven opened."

"Ah, yes! But I can't."

"I'll help you to."

"No—the bedstead can't be shifted."

"But see how I mean."

She went to where a swing-glass stood, and taking it in her hands carried it to a spot by the window where it could catch the sunshine, moving the glass till the beams were reflected into Phillotson's face.

"There; you can see the great red sun now!" she said. "And I am sure it will cheer you—I do so hope it will!"

"HER ADVENT SEEMED GHOSTLY"

She spoke with a child-like, repentant kindness, as if she could not do too much for him.

Phillotson smiled sadly. "You are an odd creature," he murmured, as the sun glowed in his eyes. "The idea of your coming to see me after what has passed!"

"Don't let us go back upon that!" she said, quickly. "I have to catch the omnibus for the train, as Jude doesn't know I have come; he was out when I started, so I must return home almost directly. Richard, I am so very glad you are better. You don't hate me, do you? You have been such a kind friend to me."

"I am glad to know you think so," said Phillotson, huskily. "No; I don't hate you!"

It grew dusk quickly in the gloomy room during their intermittent chat, and when candles were brought and it was time to leave, she put her hand in his—or, rather, allowed it to flit through his, for she was significantly light in touch. She had nearly closed the door when he said, "Sue!" He had noticed that, in turning away from him, tears were on her face and a quiver in her lip.

It was bad policy to recall her; he knew it while he pursued it. But he could not help it. She came back.

"Sue," he murmured, "do you wish to make it up, and stay? I'll forgive you, and condone everything!"

"Oh, you can't, you can't!" she said, hastily. "You can't condone it now!"

"*He* is your husband now, in effect, you mean, of course?"

"You may assume it. He is obtaining a divorce from his wife Arabella."

"His wife! It is altogether news to me that he has a wife."

"It was a bad marriage."

"Like yours?"

"Like mine. He is not doing it so much on his own account as on hers. She wrote and told him it would be

a kindness to her, since then she could marry and live respectably. And Jude has agreed."

"A wife. . . . A kindness to her. Ah, yes; a kindness to her to release her altogether. . . . But I don't like the sound of it. *I* can forgive, Sue!"

"No, no! You can't have me back, now I have been so wicked—as to do what I have done!"

There had arisen in Sue's face that incipient fright which showed itself whenever he changed from friend to husband, and which made her adopt any line of defence against marital feeling in him. "I *must* go now. I'll come again—may I?"

"I don't ask you to go, even now. I ask you to stay."

"I thank you, Richard, but I must. As you are not so ill as I thought, I *cannot* stay!"

"She's his—his from lips to heel!" said Phillotson, but so faintly that in closing the door she did not hear it. The dread of a reactionary change in the school-master's sentiments, coupled perhaps with a faint shamefacedness at letting even him know what a slipshod lack of thoroughness, from a man's point of view, characterized her transferred allegiance, prevented her telling him of her, thus far, incomplete relations with Jude; and Phillotson lay writhing like a man in hell as he pictured the prettily dressed, maddening compound of sympathy and averseness who bore his name, returning impatiently to the home of her lover.

Gillingham was so interested in Phillotson's affairs, and so seriously concerned about him, that he walked up the hill-side to Shaston two or three times a week, although, there and back, it was a journey of nine miles, which had to be performed between tea and supper, after a hard day's work in school. When he called on the next occasion after Sue's visit his friend was down-stairs, and Gillingham noticed that his restless mood had been supplanted by a more fixed and composed one.

"She's been here since you called last," said Phillotson.

"Not Mrs. Phillotson?"

"Yes."

"Ah! You have made it up?"

"No. . . . She just came, patted my pillow with her little white hand, played the thoughtful nurse for half an hour, and went away."

"Well—I'm hanged! A little hussy!"

"What do you say?"

"Oh—nothing!"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, what a tantalizing, capricious little woman! If she were not your wife—"

"She is not; she's another man's, except in name and law. And I have been thinking—it was suggested to me by a conversation I had with her—that, in kindness to her, I ought to dissolve the legal tie altogether, which, singularly enough, I think I can do, now she has been back, and refused my request to stay, after I said I had forgiven her. I believe that fact would afford me opportunity of doing it, though I did not see it at the moment. What's the use of keeping her chained on to me if she doesn't belong to me? I know—I feel absolutely certain—that she would welcome my taking such a step as the greatest charity to her. For though as a fellow-creature she sympathizes with, and pities me, and even weeps for me, as a husband she cannot endure me—she loathes me. There's no use in mincing words; she loathes me, and my only manly and dignified and merciful course is to complete what I have begun. . . . And for worldly reasons, too, it will be better for her to be independent. I have hopelessly ruined my prospects because of my decision as to what was best for us, though she does not know it; I see only dire poverty ahead from my feet to the grave, for I can be accepted as teacher no more. I shall probably have enough to do to make both ends meet during the remainder of my life, now my occupation's gone; and I

shall be better able to bear it alone. I may as well tell you that what has suggested my letting her go is some news she brought me—the news that Fawley is doing the same."

"Oh, he had a spouse, too? A queer couple, these lovers!"

"Well—I don't want your opinion on that. What I was going to say is that my liberating her can do her no possible harm, and will open up a chance of happiness for her which she has never dreamed of hitherto. For then they'll be able to marry, as they ought to have done at first."

Gillingham did not hurry to reply. "I may disagree with your motive," he said, gently, for he respected views he could not share. "But I think you are right in your determination—if you can carry it out. I doubt, however, if you can."

Part V

AT ALDBRICKHAM AND ELSEWHERE

"*Thy aerial part, and all the fiery parts which are mingled in thee, though by nature they have an upward tendency, still in obedience to the disposition of the universe they are overpowered here in the compound mass the body.*"—M. ANTONINUS (Long).

I

How Gillingham's doubts were disposed of will most quickly appear by passing over the series of dreary months and incidents that followed the events of the last chapter, and coming on to a Sunday in the February of the year following.

Sue and Jude were living in Aldbrickham, in precisely the same relations that they had established between themselves when she left Shaston to join him the year before. The proceedings in the Law-Courts had reached their consciousness but as a distant sound, and an occasional missive, which they hardly understood.

They had met, as usual, to breakfast together in the little house with Jude's name on it, that he had taken at fifteen pounds a year, with three-pounds-ten extra for rates and taxes, and furnished with his aunt's ancient and lumbering goods, which had cost him about their full value to bring all the way from Marygreen. Sue kept house, and managed everything.

As he entered the room this morning Sue held up a letter she had just received.

"Well, and what is it about?" he said, after kissing her.

"That the decree *nisi* in the case of Phillotson *versus* Phillotson and Fawley, pronounced six months ago, has just been made absolute."

"Ah," said Jude, as he sat down.

The same concluding incident in Jude's suit against Arabella had occurred about a month or two earlier. Both cases had been too insignificant to be reported in

the papers, further than by name in a long list of other undefended cases.

"Now then, Sue, at any rate, you can do what you like!" He looked at his sweetheart curiously.

"Are we — you and I — just as free now as if we had never married at all?"

"Just as free—except, I believe, that a clergyman may object personally to re-marry you, and hand the job on to somebody else."

"But I wonder—do you think it is really so with us? I know it is generally. But I have an uncomfortable feeling that my freedom has been obtained under false pretences!"

"How?"

"Well, if the truth about us had been known, the decree wouldn't have been pronounced. It is only, is it, because we have made no defence, and have led them into a false supposition? Therefore is my freedom lawful, however proper it may be?"

"Well — why did you let it be under false pretences? You have only yourself to blame," he said, mischievously.

"Jude—don't! You ought not to be touchy about that still. You must take me as I am."

"Very well, darling, so I will. Perhaps you were right. As to your question, we were not obliged to prove anything. That was their business. Anyhow, we are living together."

"Yes; though not in their sense."

"One thing is certain, that however brought about, a marriage is dissolved when it is dissolved. There is this advantage in being poor, obscure people like us — that these things are done for us in a rough-and-ready fashion. It was the same with me and Arabella. I was afraid her criminal second marriage would have been discovered, and she punished; but nobody took any interest in her— nobody inquired, nobody suspected it. If we'd been patented nobilities we should have had infinite trouble,

and days and weeks would have been spent in investigations."

By degrees Sue acquired her lover's cheerfulness at the sense of freedom, and proposed that they should take a walk in the fields, even if they had to put up with a cold dinner on account of it. Jude agreed, and Sue went upstairs and prepared to start, putting on a joyful colored gown in observance of her liberty; seeing which, Jude put on a lighter tie.

"Now we'll strut arm-in-arm," he said, "like any other engaged couple. We've a legal right to."

They rambled out of the town, and along a path over the low-lying lands that bordered it, though these were frosty now, and the extensive seed-fields were bare of color and produce. The pair, however, were so absorbed in their own situation that their surroundings were little in their consciousness.

"Well, my dearest, the result of all this is that we can marry after a decent interval."

"Yes, I suppose we can," said Sue, without enthusiasm.

"And aren't we going to?"

"I don't like to say no, dear Jude, but I feel just the same about it now as I have done all along. I have just the same dread lest an iron contract should extinguish your tenderness for me, and mine for you, as it did between our unfortunate parents."

"Still, what can we do? I do love you, as you know, Sue."

"I know it abundantly. But I think I would much rather go on living always as lovers, as we are living now, and only meeting by day. It is so much sweeter—for the woman at least, and when she is sure of the man. And henceforward we needn't be so particular as we have been about appearances."

"Our experiences of matrimony with others have not been encouraging, I own," said he, with some gloom;

"either owing to our own dissatisfied, unpractical natures, or by our misfortune. But we two—"

"Should be two dissatisfied ones linked together, which would be twice as bad as before. . . . I think I should begin to be afraid of you, Jude, the moment you had contracted to cherish me under a Government stamp, and I was licensed to be loved on the premises by you. Ugh, how horrible and sordid! Although, as you are, free, I trust you more than any other man in the world."

"No, no; don't say I should change!" he expostulated; yet there was misgiving in his own voice also.

"Apart from ourselves, and our unhappy peculiarities, it is foreign to a man's nature to go on loving a person when he is told that he must and shall be that person's lover. There would be a much likelier chance of his doing it if he were told not to love. If the marriage ceremony consisted in an oath and signed contract between the parties to cease loving from that day forward, in consideration of personal possession being given, and to avoid each other's society as much as possible in public, there would be more loving couples than there are now. Fancy the secret meetings between the perjuring husband and wife, the denials of having seen each other, the clambering in at bedroom windows, and the hiding in closets! There'd be little cooling then."

"Yes; but admitting this, or something like it, to be true, you are not the only one in the world to see it, dear little Sue. People go on marrying because they can't resist natural forces, although many of them may know perfectly well that they are possibly buying a month's pleasure with a life's discomfort. No doubt my father and mother, and your father and mother, saw it, if they at all resembled us in habits of observation. But then they went and married just the same, because they had ordinary passions. But you, Sue, are such a phantasmal, bodiless creature, one who — if you'll allow me to say it — has so little animal passion in you, that you can act upon reason

in the matter, when we poor unfortunate wretches of grosser substance can't."

"Well," she sighed, "you've owned that it would probably end in misery for us. And I am not so exceptional a woman as you think. Fewer women like marriage than you suppose, only they enter into it for the dignity it is assumed to confer, and the social advantages it gains them sometimes—a dignity and an advantage that I am quite willing to do without."

Jude fell back upon his old complaint—that, intimate as they were, he had never once had from her an honest, candid declaration that she loved or could love him. "I really fear sometimes that you cannot," he said, with a dubiousness approaching anger. "And you are so reticent. I know that women are taught by other women that they must never admit the full truth to a man. But the highest form of affection is based on full sincerity on both sides. Not being men, these women don't know that in looking back on those he has had tender relations with, a man's heart returns closest to her who was the soul of truth in her conduct. The better class of man, even if caught by airy affectations of dodging and parrying, is not retained by them. A Nemesis attends the woman who plays the game of elusiveness too often, in the utter contempt for her that, sooner or later, her old admirers feel; under which they allow her to go unlamented to her grave."

Sue, who was regarding the distance, had acquired a guilty look; and she suddenly replied, in a tragic voice: "I don't think I like you to-day so well as I did, Jude!"

"Don't you? Why?"

"Oh, well—you are not nice—too sermony. Though I suppose I am so bad and worthless that I deserve the utmost rigor of lecturing!"

"No, you are not bad. You are a dear. But as slippery as an eel when I want to get a confession from you."

"Oh yes, I am bad, and obstinate, and all sorts! It is no use your pretending I am not! People who are good don't want scolding as I do. . . . But now that I have nobody but you, and nobody to defend me, it is *very* hard that I mustn't have my own way in deciding how I'll live with you, and whether I'll be married or no!"

"Sue, my own comrade and sweetheart, I don't want to force you either to marry or to do the other thing—of course I don't! It is too wicked of you to be so pettish! Now we won't say any more about it, and go on just the same as we have done; and during the rest of our walk we'll talk of the meadows only, and the floods, and the prospect of the farmers this coming year."

After this the subject of marriage was not mentioned by them for several days, though living as they were, with only a landing between them, it was constantly in their minds. Sue was assisting Jude very materially now. He had latterly occupied himself on his own account in working and lettering head-stones, which he kept in a little yard at the back of his little house, where in the intervals of domestic duties she marked out the letters full size for him, and blacked them in after he had cut them. It was a lower class of handicraft than were his former performances as a cathedral mason, and his only patrons were the poor people who lived in his own neighborhood, and knew what a cheap man this "Jude Fawley: Monumental Mason" (as he called himself on his front door), was to employ for the simple memorials they required for their dead. But he seemed more independent than before, and it was the only arrangement under which Sue, who particularly wished to be no burden on him, could render any assistance.

II

It was an evening at the end of the month, and Jude had just returned home from hearing a lecture on ancient history in the public hall not far off. When he entered, Sue, who had been keeping in-doors during his absence, laid out supper for him. Contrary to custom, she did not speak. Jude had taken up some illustrated paper, which he perused, till, raising his eyes, he saw that her face was troubled.

"Are you depressed, Sue?" he said.

She paused a moment. "I have a message for you," she answered.

"Somebody has called?"

"Yes. A woman." Sue's voice quavered as she spoke, and she suddenly sat down from her preparations, laid her hands in her lap, and looked into the fire. "I don't know whether I did right or not," she continued. "I said you were not at home, and when she said she would wait, I said I thought you might not be able to see her."

"Why did you say that, dear? I suppose she wanted a head-stone. Was she in mourning?"

"No. She wasn't in mourning, and she didn't want a head stone; and I thought you wouldn't see her." Sue looked critically and imploringly at him.

"But who was she? Didn't she say?"

"No. She wouldn't give her name. But I know who she was—I think I do! It was Arabella!"

"Heaven save us! What should Arabella come for? What made you think it was she?"

"Oh, I can hardly tell. But I know it was! I feel

perfectly certain it was—by the light in her eyes as she looked at me. She was a fleshy, coarse woman."

"Well, I should not have called Arabella coarse exactly, except in speech, though she may be getting so by this time under the duties of the public-house. She was rather handsome when I knew her."

"Handsome! But yes; so she is!"

"I think I heard a quiver in your little mouth. Well, waiving that, as she is nothing to me, and virtuously married to another man, why should she come troubling us?"

"Are you sure she's married? Have you definite news of it?"

"No, not definite news. But that was why she asked me to release her. She and the man both wanted to lead a proper life, as I understood."

"Oh, Jude, it was, it *was* Arabella!" cried Sue, covering her eyes with her hand. "And I am so miserable! It seems such an ill-omen, whatever she may have come for. You could not possibly see her, could you?"

"I don't really think I could. It would be so very painful to talk to her now—for her as much as for me. However, she's gone. Did she say she would come again?"

"No. But she went away very reluctantly."

Sue, whom the least thing upset, could not eat any supper, and when Jude had finished his he prepared to go to bed. He had no sooner raked out the fire, fastened the doors, and got to the top of the stairs, than there came a knock. Sue instantly emerged from her room, which she had but just entered.

"There she is again!" Sue whispered, in appalled accents.

"How do you know?"

"She knocked like that last time."

They listened, and the knocking came again. No servant was kept in the house, and if the summons were to be responded to one of them would have to do it in per-

son. "I'll open a window," said Jude. "Whoever it is cannot be expected to be let in at this time."

He accordingly went into his bedroom and lifted the sash. The obscure street of early retiring work-people was empty from end to end save of one figure—that of a woman walking up and down by the lamp a few yards off.

"Who's there?" he asked.

"Is that Mr. Fawley?" came up from the woman, in a voice which was unmistakably Arabella's.

Jude replied that it was.

"Is it she?" asked Sue from the door, with lips apart.

"Yes, dear," said Jude. "What do you want, Arabella?" he inquired.

"I beg your pardon, Jude, for disturbing you," said Arabella, humbly. "But I called earlier. I wanted particularly to see you to-night, if I could. I am in trouble, and have nobody to help me!"

"In trouble, are you?"

"Yes."

There was a silence. An inconvenient sympathy seemed to be rising in Jude's breast at the appeal. "But aren't you married?" he said.

Arabella hesitated. "No, Jude, I am not," she returned. "He wouldn't, after all. And I am in great difficulty. I hope to get another situation as barmaid soon. But it takes time, and I really am in great distress, because of the sudden responsibility that's been sprung upon me from Australia; or I wouldn't trouble you—believe me, I wouldn't. I want to tell you about it."

Sue remained at gaze, in painful tension, hearing every word, but speaking none.

"You are not really in want of money, Arabella?" he asked, in a distinctly softened tone.

"I have enough to pay for the night's lodging I have obtained, but barely enough to take me back again."

"Where are you living?"

"In London still." She was about to give the address, but she said, "I am afraid somebody may hear, so I don't like to call out particulars of myself so loud. If you could come down and walk a little way with me towards the Prince Inn, where I am staying to-night, I would explain all. You may as well, for old time's sake."

"Poor thing! I must do her the kindness of hearing what's the matter, I suppose," said Jude, in much perplexity. "As she's going back to-morrow it can't make much difference."

"But you can go and see her to-morrow, Jude! Don't go now, Jude!" came in plaintive accents from the doorway. "Oh, it is only to entrap you; I know it is, as she did before! Don't, don't go, dear! She is such a low-passioned woman—I can see it in her shape, and hear it in her voice!"

"But I shall go," said Jude. "Don't attempt to detain me, Sue. God knows I love her little enough now, but I don't want to be cruel to her." He turned to the stairs.

"But she's not your wife!" cried Sue, distractedly. "And I—"

"And you are not either, dear, yet," said Jude.

"Oh, but are you going to her? Don't! Stay at home! Please, please stay at home, Jude, and not go to her, now she's not your wife any more than I!"

"Well, she is, rather more than you, come to that," he said, taking his hat determinedly. "I've wanted you to be, and I've waited with the patience of Job, and I don't see that I've got anything by my self-denial. I shall certainly give her something, and hear what it is she is so anxious to tell me; no man could do less."

There was that in his manner which she knew it would be futile to oppose. She said no more, but, turning to her room as meekly as a martyr, heard him go down-stairs, unbolt the door, and close it behind him. With a woman's disregard of her dignity when in the presence of no-

body but herself, she also trotted down, sobbing articulately as she went. She listened. She knew exactly how far it was to the inn that Arabella had named as her lodging. It would occupy about seven minutes to get there at an ordinary walking pace; seven to come back again. If he did not return in fourteen minutes he would have lingered. She looked at the clock. It was twenty-five minutes to eleven. He *might* enter the inn with Arabella, as they would reach it before closing time; she might get him to drink with her; and Heaven only knew what disasters would befall him then.

In a still suspense she waited on. It seemed as if the whole time had nearly elapsed, when the door was opened again, and Jude appeared.

Sue gave a little ecstatic cry. "Oh, I knew I could trust you! How good you are—" she began.

"I can't find her anywhere in this street, and I went out in my slippers only. She has walked on, thinking I've been so hard-hearted as to refuse her requests entirely, poor woman. I've come back for my boots, as it is beginning to rain."

"Oh, but why should you take such trouble for a woman who has served you so badly!" said Sue, in a jealous burst of disappointment.

"But, Sue, she's a woman, and I once cared for her; and one can't be a brute in such circumstances."

"She isn't your wife any longer!" exclaimed Sue, passionately excited. "You *mustn't* go out to find her! It isn't right! You *can't* join her, now she's a stranger to you. How can you forget such a thing, my dear, dear one!"

"She seems much the same as ever—an erring, careless, unreflecting fellow-creature," he said, continuing to pull on his boots. "What those legal fellows have been playing at in London makes no difference in my real relations to her. If she was my wife while she was away in Australia with another husband, she's my wife now."

"But she wasn't! That's just what I hold! There's the absurdity! Well, you'll come straight back, after a few minutes, won't you, dear? She is too low, too coarse for you to talk to long, Jude, and was always!"

"Perhaps I am coarse, too, worse luck! I have the germs of every human infirmity in me, I verily believe—that was why I saw it was so preposterous of me to think of being a curate. I have cured myself of drunkenness, I think; but I never know in what new form a suppressed vice will break out in me! I do love you, Sue, though I have danced attendance on you so long for such poor returns! All that's best and noblest in me loves you, and your freedom from everything that's gross has elevated me, and enabled me to do what I should never have dreamed myself capable of, or any man, a year or two ago. It is all very well to preach about self-control, and the wickedness of coercing a woman. But I should just like a few virtuous people who have condemned me in the past, about Arabella and other things, to have been in my tantalizing position with you through these late weeks!—they'd believe, I think, that I have exercised some little restraint in always giving in to your wishes—living here in one house, and not a soul between us."

"Yes, you have been good to me, Jude; I know you have, my dear protector."

"Well, Arabella appeals to me. I must go out and speak to her, Sue, at least!"

"I can't say any more! Oh, if you must, you must!" she said, bursting out into sobs that seemed to tear her heart. "I have nobody but you, Jude, and you are deserting me! I didn't know you were like this—I can't bear it, I can't! If she were yours it would be different!"

"Or if you were."

"Very well, then—if I must, I must. Since you will have it so, I agree! I will be. Only I didn't mean to! And I didn't want to marry again, either! . . . But, yes—I agree,

I agree! I ought to have known that you would conquer in the long-run, living like this!"

She ran across and flung her arms round his neck. "I am not a cold-natured, sexless creature, am I, for keeping you at such a distance? I am sure you don't think so! Wait and see! I do belong to you, don't I? I give in."

"And I'll arrange for our marriage to-morrow, or as soon as ever you wish."

"Yes, Jude."

"Then I'll let her go," said he, embracing Sue softly. "I do feel that it would be unfair to you to see her, and perhaps unfair to her. She is not like you, my darling, and never was: it is only bare justice to say that. Don't cry any more. There, and there, and there!" He kissed her on one side, and on the other, and in the middle, and rebolted the front door.

The next morning it was wet.

"Now, dear," said Jude, gayly, at breakfast, "as this is Saturday, I mean to call about the banns at once, so as to get the first publishing done to-morrow, or we shall lose a week. Banns will do? We shall save a pound or two."

Sue absently agreed to banns. But her mind for the moment was running on something else. A glow had passed away from her, and depression sat upon her features.

"I feel I was wickedly selfish last night!" she murmured. "It was sheer unkindness in me—or worse—to treat Arabella as I did. I didn't care about her being in trouble, and what she wished to tell you! Perhaps it was really something she was justified in telling you. That's some more of my badness, I suppose! Love has its own dark morality when rivalry enters in—at least, mine has, if other people's hasn't. . . . I wonder how she got on? I hope she reached the inn all right, poor woman."

"Oh yes; she got on all right," said Jude, placidly.

"I hope she wasn't shut out, and that she hadn't to walk the streets in the rain. Do you mind my putting on my

water-proof and going to see if she got in? I've been thinking of her all the morning."

"Well—is it necessary? You haven't the least idea how Arabella is able to shift for herself. Still, darling, if you want to go and inquire you can."

There was no limit to the strange and unnecessary penances which Sue would meekly undertake when in a contrite mood; and this going to see all sorts of extraordinary persons whose relation to her was precisely of a kind that would have made other people shun them, was her instinct ever, so that the request did not surprise him.

"And when you come back," he added, "I'll be ready to go about the banns. You'll come with me?"

Sue agreed, and went off under cloak and umbrella, letting Jude kiss her freely, and returning his kisses in a way she had never done before. Times had decidedly changed. "The bird is caught at last!" she said, a little sadness showing in her smile.

"No, only nested," he assured her.

She walked along the muddy street till she reached the public-house mentioned by Arabella, which was not so very far off. She was informed that Arabella had not yet left, and in doubt how to announce herself so that her predecessor in Jude's affections would recognize her, she sent up word that a friend from Spring Street had called, naming the place of Jude's residence. She was asked to step up-stairs, and on being shown into a room, found that it was Arabella's bedroom, and that the latter had not yet risen. She halted on the turn of her toe till Arabella cried from the bed, "Come in and shut the door," which Sue accordingly did.

Arabella lay facing the window, and did not at once turn her head; and Sue was wicked enough, despite her penitence, to wish for a moment that Jude could behold her forerunner now, with the daylight full upon her. She may have seemed handsome enough in profile under the lamps, but a frowsiness was apparent this morning; and

the sight of her own fresh charms in the looking-glass made Sue's manner bright, till she reflected what a meanly sexual emotion this was in her, and hated herself for it.

"I've just looked in to see if you got back comfortably last night, that's all," she said, gently. "I was afraid afterwards that you might have met with any mishap."

"Oh, how stupid this is! I thought my visitor was—your friend—your husband—Mrs. Fawley, as I suppose you call yourself?" said Arabella, flinging her head back upon the pillows with a disappointed toss, and ceasing to retain the dimple she had just taken the trouble to produce.

"Indeed I don't," said Sue.

"Oh, I thought you might have, even if he's not legally yours. Decency is decency, any hour of the twenty-four."

"I don't know what you mean," said Sue, stiffly. "He is mine, if you come to that!"

"He wasn't yesterday."

Sue colored roseate, and said, "How do you know?"

"From your manner when you talked to me at the door. Well, my dear, you've been quick about it, and I expect my visit last night helped it on—ha-ha! But I don't want to get him away from you."

Sue looked out at the rain, and at the dirty toilet-cover, and at the detached tail of Arabella's hair hanging on the looking-glass, just as it had done in Jude's time, and wished she had not come. In the pause there was a knock at the door, and the chamber-maid brought in a telegram for "Mrs. Cartlett."

Arabella opened it as she lay, and her ruffled look disappeared.

"I am much obliged to you for your anxiety about me," she said, blandly, when the maid had gone; "but it is not necessary you should feel it. My man finds he can't do without me after all, and agrees to stand by the promise, to marry again over here, that he has made me all along. See here. This is in answer to one from me." She held

out the telegram for Sue to read, but Sue did not take it. "He asks me to come back. His little corner public in Lambeth would go to pieces without me, he says. But he isn't going to knock me about when he has had a drop, any more after we are spliced by English law than before. . . . As for you, I should coax Jude to take me before the parson straight off, and have done with it, if I were in your place. I say it as a friend, my dear."

"He's waiting to, any day," returned Sue, with frigid pride.

"Then let him, in Heaven's name. Life with a man is more businesslike after it, and money matters work better. And then, you see, if you have rows, and he turns you out-of-doors, you can get the law to protect you, which you can't otherwise, unless he half runs you through with a knife, or cracks your noddle with a poker. And if he bolts away from you—I say it friendly, as woman to woman, for there's never any knowing what a man med do—you'll have the sticks o' furniture, and won't be looked upon as a thief. I shall marry my man over again, now he's willing, as there was a little flaw in the first ceremony. In my telegram last night, which this is an answer to, I told him I had almost made it up with Jude; and that frightened him, I expect! Perhaps I should quite have done it if it hadn't been for you," she said, laughing; "and then how different our histories might have been from to-day! Never such a tender fool as Jude is if a woman seems in trouble, and coaxes him a bit. Just as he used to be about birds and things. However, as it happens, it is just as well as if I had made it up, and I forgive you. And, as I say, I'd advise you to get the business legally done as soon as possible. You'll find it an awful bother later on if you don't."

"I have told you he is asking me to marry him—to make our natural marriage a legal one," said Sue, with yet more dignity. "It was quite by my wish that he didn't the moment I was free."

"Ah, yes — you are a oneyer too, like myself," said Arabella, eying her visitor with humorous criticism. "Bolted from your first, didn't you, like me?"

"Good morning!—I must go," said Sue, hastily.

"And I, too, must up and off!" replied the other, springing out of bed so suddenly that the soft parts of her person shook. Sue jumped aside in trepidation. "Lord, I am only a woman — not a six-foot sojer! . . . Just a moment, dear," she continued, putting her hand on Sue's arm. "I really did want to consult Jude on a little matter of business, as I told him. I came about that more than anything else. Would he run up to speak to me at the station as I am going? You think not. Well, I'll write to him about it. I didn't want to write it— but never mind, I will."

III

When Sue reached home Jude was awaiting her at the door to take the initial step towards their marriage. She clasped his arm, and they went along silently together, as true comrades ofttimes do. He saw that she was preoccupied, and forbore to question her.

"Oh, Jude, I've been talking to her," she said at last. "I wish I hadn't! And yet it is best to be reminded of things."

"I hope she was civil."

"Yes. I—I can't help liking her—just a little bit! She's not an ungenerous nature; and I am so glad her difficulties have all suddenly ended." She explained how Arabella had been summoned back, and would be enabled to retrieve her position. "I was referring to our old question. What Arabella has been saying to me has made me feel more than ever how hopelessly vulgar an institution legal marriage is—a sort of trap to catch a man. I can't bear to think of it. I wish I hadn't promised to let you put up the banns this morning."

"Oh, don't mind me. Any time will do for me. I thought you might like to get it over quickly, now."

"Indeed, I don't feel any more anxious now than I did before. Perhaps with any other man I might be a little anxious; but among the very few virtues possessed by your family and mine, dear, I think I may set stanchness. So I am not a bit frightened about losing you, now I really am yours and you really are mine. In fact, I am easier in my mind than I was, for my conscience is clear

about Richard, who now has a right to his freedom. I felt we were deceiving him before."

"Sue, you seem when you are like this to be one of the women of some grand old civilization, whom I used to read about in my by-gone, wasted, classical days, rather than a denizen of a mere Christian country. I almost expect you to say at these times that you have just been talking to some friend whom you met in the Via Sacra about the latest news of Octavia or Livia, or have been listening to Aspasia's eloquence, or have been watching Praxiteles chiselling away at his latest Venus, while Phryne made complaint that she was tired of posing."

They had now reached the house of the parish-clerk. Sue stood back, while her lover went up to the door. His hand was raised to knock, when she said, "Jude!"

He looked round.

"Wait a minute, would you mind?"

He came back to her.

"Just let us think," she said, timidly. "I had such a horrid dream one night. . . . And Arabella—"

"What did Arabella say to you?" he asked.

"Oh, she said that when people were tied up you could get the law of a man better if he beat you—and how, when couples quarrelled. . . . Jude, do you think that when you *must* have me with you by law, we shall be so happy as we are now? The men and women of our family are very generous when everything depends upon their good-will, but they always kick against compulsion. Don't you dread the attitude that insensibly arises out of legal obligation? Don't you think it is destructive to a passion whose essence is its gratuitousness?"

"Upon my word, love, you are beginning to frighten me, too, with all this foreboding! Well, let's go back and think it over."

Her face brightened. "Yes—so we will!" said she. And they turned from the clerk's door, Sue taking his arm and murmuring as they walked on homeward:

"Can you keep the bee from ranging,
Or the ring-dove's neck from changing?
No! Nor fetter'd love . . ."

They thought it over, or postponed thinking. Certainly they postponed action, and seemed to live on in a dreamy paradise. At the end of a fortnight or three weeks matters remained unadvanced, and no banns were announced to the ears of any Aldbrickham congregation.

Whilst they were postponing and postponing thus, a letter and a newspaper arrived before breakfast one morning from Arabella. Seeing the handwriting, Jude went up to Sue's room and told her, and as soon as she was dressed she hastened down. Sue opened the newspaper; Jude the letter. After glancing at the paper she held across the first page to him with her finger on a paragraph; but he was so absorbed in his letter that he did not turn a while.

"Look!" said she.

He looked and read. The paper was one that circulated in South London only, and the marked advertisement was simply the announcement of a marriage at St. John's Church, Waterloo Road, under the names, "CARTLETT—DONN"; the united pair being Arabella and the inn-keeper.

"Well, it is satisfactory," said Sue, complacently. "Though, after this, it seems rather low to do likewise, and I am glad— However, she is provided for now in a way, I suppose, whatever her faults, poor thing! It is nicer that we are able to think that, than to be uneasy about her. I ought, too, to write to Richard and ask him how he is getting on, perhaps?"

But Jude's attention was still absorbed. Having merely glanced at the announcement, he said, in a disturbed voice: "Listen to this letter. What shall I say or do?

"'THE THREE HORNS, LAMBETH.

"'DEAR JUDE (I won't be so distant as to call you Mr. Fawley),—I send to-day a newspaper, from which useful document you will learn that I was married over again to Cartlett last Tuesday. So that business is settled right and tight at last. But what I write about more particular is that private affair I wanted to speak to you on when I came down to Aldbrickham. I couldn't very well tell it to your lady friend, and should much have liked to let you know it by word of mouth, as I could have explained better than by letter. The fact is, Jude, that, though I have never informed you before, there was a boy born of our marriage, eight months after I left you, when I was at Sydney, living with my father and mother. All that is easily provable. As I had separated from you before I thought such a thing was going to happen, and I was over there, and our quarrel had been sharp, I did not think it convenient to write about the birth. I was then looking out for a good situation, so my parents took the child, and he has been with them ever since. That was why I did not mention it when I met you in Christminster, nor at the law proceedings. He is now of an intelligent age, of course, and my mother and father have lately written to say that, as they have rather a hard struggle over there, and I am settled comfortably here, they don't see why they should be encumbered with the child any longer, his parents being alive. I would have him with me here in a moment, but he is not old enough to be of any use in the bar, nor will be for years and years, and, naturally, Cartlett might think him in the way. They have, however, packed him off to me in charge of some friends, who happened to be coming home, and I must ask you to take him when he arrives, for I don't know what to do with him. He is lawfully yours, that I solemnly swear. If anybody says he isn't, call them brimstone liars, for my sake. Whatever I may have done before or afterwards, I was honest to you from the time we were married till I went away, and I remain, yours, &c., ARABELLA CARTLETT.'"

Sue's look was one of dismay. "What will you do, dear?" she asked, faintly.

Jude did not reply, and Sue watched him anxiously, with heavy breaths.

"It hits me hard!" said he, in an under-voice. "It *may* be true! I can't make it out. Certainly, if his age is exactly what it ought to be. . . . I cannot think why she didn't tell me when I met her at Christminster, and came on here that evening with her! . . . Ah—I do remember now that she said something about having a thing on her mind that she would like me to know, if ever we lived together again."

"The poor child seems to be wanted by nobody!" Sue replied, and her eyes filled.

Jude had by this time come to himself. "What a view of life he must have, mine or not mine!" he said. "I must say that, if I were better off, I should not stop for a moment to think whose he might be. I would take him and bring him up. The beggarly question of parentage—what is it, after all? What does it matter, when you come to think of it, whether a child is yours by blood or not? All the little ones of our time are collectively the children of us adults of the time, and entitled to our general care. That excessive regard of parents for their own children, and their dislike of other people's is, like class-feeling, patriotism, save-your-own-soul-ism, and other virtues, a mean exclusiveness at bottom."

Sue jumped up and kissed Jude with passionate devotion. "Yes—so it is, dearest! And we'll have him here. And if he isn't yours it makes it all the better. I do hope he isn't—though perhaps I ought not to feel quite that! If he isn't, I should like so much for us to have him as an adopted child!"

"Well, you must assume about him what is most pleasing to you, my curious little comrade!" he said. "I feel that, anyhow, I don't like to leave the unfortunate little fellow to neglect. Just think of his life in a Lambeth pot-house, and all its evil influences, with a parent who doesn't want him, and has, indeed, hardly seen him, and a step-father who doesn't know him. 'Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was

said, There is a man child conceived!' That's what the boy — *my* boy, perhaps—will find himself saying before long!"

"Oh no!"

"As I was the petitioner, I am really entitled to his custody, I suppose."

"Whether or no, we must have him. I see that. I'll do the best I can to be a mother to him, and we can afford to keep him somehow. I'll work harder. I wonder when he'll arrive?"

"In the course of a few weeks, I suppose."

"I wish— When shall we have courage to marry, Jude?"

"Whenever you have it, I think I shall. It remains with you entirely, dear. Only say the word, and it's done."

"Before the boy comes?"

"Certainly."

"It would make a more natural home for him, perhaps," she murmured.

Jude thereupon wrote in purely formal terms to request that the boy should be sent on to them as soon as he arrived, making no remark whatever on the surprising nature of Arabella's information, nor vouchsafing a single word of opinion on the boy's paternity, nor on whether, had he known all this, his conduct towards her would have been quite the same.

In the down train that was timed to reach Aldbrickham station about ten o'clock the next evening, a small, pale child's face could be seen in the gloom of a third-class carriage. He had large, frightened eyes, and wore a white woollen cravat, over which a key was suspended round his neck by a piece of common string, the key attracting attention by its occasional shine in the lamplight. In the band of his hat his half-ticket was stuck. His eyes remained mostly fixed on the back of the seat

opposite, and never turned to the window, even when a station was reached and called. On the other seat were two or three passengers, one of them a working-woman, who held a basket on her lap, in which was a tabby kitten. The woman opened the cover now and then, whereupon the kitten would put out its head, and indulge in playful antics. At these the fellow-passengers laughed, except the solitary boy bearing the key and ticket, who, regarding the kitten with his saucer eyes, seemed mutely to say: "All laughing comes from misapprehension. Rightly looked at, there is no laughable thing under the sun."

Occasionally, at a stoppage, the guard would look into the compartment and say to the boy, "All right, my man. Your box is safe in the van." The boy would say, "Yes," without animation, would try to smile, and fail.

He was Age masquerading as Juvenility, and doing it so badly that his real self showed through crevices. A ground swell from ancient years of night seemed now and then to lift the child in this his morning-life, when his face took a back view over some great Atlantic of time, and appeared not to care about what it saw.

When the other travellers closed their eyes, which they did one by one—even the kitten curling itself up in the basket, weary of its too circumscribed play—the boy remained just as before. He then seemed to be doubly awake, like an enslaved and dwarfed Divinity, sitting passive, and regarding his companions as if he saw their whole rounded lives rather than their immediate figures.

This was Arabella's boy. With her usual carelessness, she had postponed writing to Jude about him till the eve of his landing, when she could absolutely postpone no longer, though she had known for weeks of his approaching arrival, and had, as she truly said, visited Aldbrickham mainly to reveal the boy's existence and his near home-coming to Jude. This very day, on which she had received her former husband's answer at some time in

the afternoon, the child reached the London Docks, and the family in whose charge he had come having put him into a cab for Lambeth, and directed the cabman to his mother's house, bade him good-bye, and went their way.

On his arrival at the Three Horns, Arabella had looked him over with an expression that was as good as saying, "You are very much what I expected you to be," had given him a good meal, a little money, and, late as it was getting, despatched him to Jude by the next train, wishing her husband Cartlett, who was out, not to see him.

The train reached Aldbrickham, and the boy was deposited on the lonely platform beside his box. The collector took his ticket, and, with a meditative sense of the unfitness of things, asked him where he was going by himself at that time of night?

"Going to Spring Street," said the little one, impassively.

"Why, that's a long way from here; a'most out in the country; and the folks will be gone to bed."

"I've got to go there."

"You must have a fly for your box."

"No. I must walk."

"Oh, well, you'd better leave your box here and send for it. There's a 'bus goes half-way, but you'll have to walk the rest."

"I am not afraid."

"Why didn't your friends come to meet 'ee?"

"I suppose they didn't know I was coming."

"Who is your friends?"

"Mother didn't wish me to say."

"All I can do, then, is to take charge of this. Now walk as fast as you can."

Saying nothing further, the boy came out into the street, looking round to see that nobody followed or observed him. When he had walked some little distance, he asked for the street of his destination. He was told to go straight on, quite into the outskirts of the place.

The child fell into a steady, mechanical creep, which had in it an impersonal quality—the movement of the wave, or of the breeze, or of the cloud. He followed his directions literally, without an inquiring gaze at anything. It could have been seen that the boy's ideas of life were different from those of the local boys. Children begin with detail, and learn up to the general; they begin with the contiguous, and gradually comprehend the universal. The boy seemed to have begun with the generals of life, and never to have concerned himself with the particulars. To him the houses, the willows, the obscure fields beyond, were apparently regarded not as brick residences, pollards, meadows, but as human dwellings in the abstract, vegetation, and the wide, dark world.

He found the way to the little lane, and knocked at the door of Jude's house. Jude had just retired to bed, and Sue was about to enter her chamber adjoining, when she heard the knock and came down.

"Is this where father lives?" asked the child.

"Who?"

"Mr. Fawley, that's his name."

Sue ran up to Jude's room and told him, and he hurried down as soon as he could, though to her impatience he seemed long.

"What—is it he—so soon?" she asked, as Jude came.

She scrutinized the child's features, and suddenly went away into the little sitting-room adjoining. Jude lifted the boy to a level with himself, keenly regarded him with gloomy tenderness, and telling him he would have been met if they had known of his coming so soon, set him provisionally in a chair, while he went to look for Sue, whose supersensitiveness was disturbed, as he knew. He found her in the dark, bending over an arm-chair. He enclosed her with his arm, and, putting his face by hers, whispered, "What's the matter?"

"What Arabella says is true—true! I see you in him!"

"Well, that's one thing in my life as it should be, at any rate."

"But the other half of him is—*she!* And that's what I can't bear! But I ought to—I'll try to get used to it; yes, I ought!"

"Jealous little Sue! I withdraw all remarks about your sexlessness. Never mind. Time may right things. . . . And Sue, darling, I have an idea! We'll educate and train him with a view to the University. What I couldn't accomplish in my own person perhaps I can carry out through him. They are making it easier for poor students now, you know."

"Oh, you dreamer!" said she, and, holding his hand, returned to the child with him. The boy looked at her as she had looked at him. "Is it you who's my *real* mother at last?" he inquired.

"Why? Do I look like your father's wife?"

"Well, yes; 'cept he seems fond of you, and you of him. Can I call you mother?"

Then a yearning look came over the child, and he began to cry. Sue thereupon could not refrain from instantly doing likewise, being a harp which the least wind of emotion from another's heart could make to vibrate as readily as a radical stir in her own.

"You may call me mother if you wish to, my poor dear," she said, bending her cheek against his to hide her tears.

"What's this round your neck?" asked Jude, with affected calmness.

"The key of my box that's at the station."

They bustled about and got him some supper, and made him up a temporary bed, where he soon fell asleep. Both went and looked at him as he lay.

"He called you mother two or three times before he dropped off," murmured Jude. "Wasn't it odd that he should have wanted to!"

"Well, it was significant," said Sue. "There's more

for us to think about in that one little hungry heart than in all the stars of the sky. . . . I suppose, dear, we *must* pluck up courage, and get that ceremony over? It is no use struggling against the current, and I feel myself getting intertwined with my kind. Oh, Jude, you'll love me dearly, won't you, afterwards? I do want to be kind to this child, and to be a mother to him; and our adding the legal form to our marriage might make it easier for me."

IV

THEIR next and second attempt thereat was more deliberately made, though it was begun on the morning following the singular child's arrival at their home.

Him they found to be in the habit of sitting silent, his quaint and weird face set, and his eyes resting on things they did not see in the substantial world.

"His face is like the tragic mask of Melpomene," said Sue. "What is your name, dear? Did you tell us?"

"Little Father Time is what they always called me—it is a nickname—because I look so aged, they say."

"And you talk so, too," said Sue, tenderly. "It is strange, Jude, that these preternaturally old boys almost always come from new countries? But what were you christened?"

"I never was."

"Why was that?"

"Because, if I died in damnation, 'twould save the expense of a Christian funeral."

"Oh, your name is not Jude, then?" said his father, with some disappointment.

The boy shook his head. "Never heerd on it."

"Of course not," said Sue, quickly, "since she was hating you all the time."

"We'll have him christened," said Jude; and, privately, to Sue, "The day we are married." Yet the advent of the child disturbed him.

Their position lent them shyness, and having an impression that a marriage at a Superintendant Registrar's office was more private than an ecclesiastical one, they

decided to avoid a church this time. Both Sue and Jude together went to the office of the district to give notice: they had become such companions that they could hardly do anything of importance except in each other's company.

Jude Fawley signed the form of notice, Sue looking over his shoulder and watching his hand as it traced the words. As she read the four-square undertaking, never before seen by her, into which her own and Jude's names were inserted, and by which that very volatile essence, their love for each other, was supposed to be made permanent, her face seemed to grow painfully apprehensive. "Names and Surnames of the Parties" (they were to be parties now, not lovers, she thought). "Condition" (a horrid idea). "Rank or Occupation"—"Age"—"Dwelling at"—"Length of Residence"—"Church or Building in which the Marriage is to be solemnized"—"District and County in which the Parties respectively dwell."

"It spoils the sentiment, doesn't it," she said, on their way home, "It seems making a more sordid business of it even than signing the contract in a vestry. There is a little poetry in a church. But we'll try to get through with it, dearest, now."

"We will. 'For what man is he that hath betrothed a wife and hath not taken her? Let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man take her.' So said the Jewish law-giver."

"How you know the Scriptures, Jude! You really ought to have been a parson. I can only quote profane writers."

During the interval before the issuing of the certificate. Sue, in her housekeeping errands, sometimes walked past the office, and furtively glancing in, saw affixed to the wall the notice of the purposed clinch to their union. She could not bear its aspect. Coming after her previous experience of matrimony, all the romance of their attachment seemed to be starved away by placing her present

case in the same category. She was usually leading little Father Time by the hand, and fancied that people thought him hers, and regarded the intended ceremony as the patching up of an old error.

Meanwhile Jude decided to link his present with his past in some slight degree by inviting to the wedding the only person remaining on earth who was associated with his early life at Marygreen—the aged widow, Mrs. Edlin, who had been his great-aunt's friend and nurse in her last illness. He hardly expected that she would come; but she did, bringing singular presents, in the form of apples, jam, brass snuffers, an ancient pewter-dish, a warming-pan, and an enormous bag of goose-feathers towards a bed. She was allotted the spare room in Jude's house, whither she retired early, and where they could hear her through the ceiling below, honestly saying the Lord's Prayer in a loud voice, as the Rubric directed.

As, however, she could not sleep, and discovered that Sue and Jude were still sitting up—it being, in fact, only ten o'clock—she dressed herself again, and came down; and they all sat by the fire till a late hour, Father Time included; though, as he never spoke, they were hardly conscious of him.

"Well, I bain't set against marrying as your great-aunt was," said the widow. "And I hope 'twill be a jocund wedding for ye in all respects this time. Nobody can hope it more, knowing what I do of your families, which is more, I suppose, than anybody else now living. For they have been unlucky that way, God knows."

Sue breathed uneasily.

"They was always good-hearted people, too—wouldn't kill a fly if they knowed it," continued the wedding-guest. "But things happened to thwart 'em, and if everything wasn't vitty they were upset. No doubt that's how he that the tale is told of came to do what 'a did—if he *were* one of your family."

"What was that?" said Jude.

"Well, that tale, ye know—he that was gibbeted just on the brow of the hill by the Brown House—not far from the milestone between Marygreen and Alfredston, where the other road branches off. But, Lord, it was in my grandfather's time; and it medn' have been one of your folks at all."

"I know where the gibbet is said to have stood, very well," murmured Jude. "But I never heard of this. What—did this man—my ancestor and Sue's—kill his wife?"

"'Twer not that exactly. She ran away from him, with their child, to her friends; and while she was there the child died. He wanted the body, to bury it where his people lay, but she wouldn't give it up. Her husband then came in the night with a cart, and broke into the house to steal the coffin away; but he was catched, and being obstinate, wouldn't tell what he broke in for. They brought it in burglary, and that's why he was hanged and gibbeted on Brown House Hill. His wife went mad after he was dead. But it medn' be true that he belonged to ye more than to me."

A small, slow voice rose from the shade of the fireside, as if out of the earth: "If I was you, mother, I wouldn't marry father." It came from little Time, and they started, for they had forgotten him.

"Oh, it is only a tale," said Sue, cheeringly.

After this exhilarating tradition from the widow on the eve of the solemnization they rose, and, wishing their guest good-night, retired.

The next morning Sue, whose nervousness intensified with the hours, took Jude privately into the sitting-room before starting. "Jude, I want you to kiss me, as a lover, incorporeally," she said, tremulously nestling up to him, with damp lashes. "It won't be ever like this any more, will it? I wish we hadn't begun the business. But I suppose we must go on. How horrid that story was last night! It spoiled my thoughts of to-day. It makes me

"A SMALL, SLOW VOICE ROSE FROM THE SHADE OF THE FIRESIDE"

feel as if a tragic doom overhung our family, as it did the house of Atreus."

"Or the house of Jeroboam," said the quondam theologian.

"Yes. And it seems awful temerity in us two to go marrying! I am going to vow to you in the same words I vowed in to my other husband, and you to me in the same as you used to your other wife, regardless of the deterrent lesson we were taught by those experiments!"

"If you are uneasy I am made unhappy," said he. "I had hoped you would feel quite joyful. But if you don't, you don't. It is no use pretending. It is a dismal business to you, and that makes it so to me!"

"It is unpleasantly like that other morning—that's all," she murmured. "Let us go on now."

They started arm-in-arm for the office aforesaid, no witness accompanying them except the Widow Edlin. The day was chilly and dull, and a clammy fog blew through the town from "Royal-tower'd Thame." On the steps of the office there were the muddy footmarks of people who had entered, and in the entry were damp umbrellas. Within the office several persons were gathered, and our couple perceived that a marriage between a soldier and a young woman was just in progress. Sue, Jude, and the widow stood in the background while this was going on, Sue reading the notices of marriage on the wall. The room was a dreary place to two of their temperament, though to its usual frequenters it doubtless seemed ordinary enough. Law-books in musty calf covered one wall, and elsewhere were Post-Office Directories, and other books of reference. Papers in packets tied with red tape were pigeon-holed around, and some iron safes filled a recess; while the bare wood floor was, like the door-step, stained by previous visitors.

The soldier was sullen and reluctant, the bride sad and timid; she was soon, obviously, to become a mother, and she had a black eye. Their little business was soon done,

and the twain and their friends straggled out, one of the witnesses saying casually to Jude and Sue in passing, as if he had known them before: "See the couple just come in? Ha, ha! That fellow is just out of jail this morning. She met him at the jail gates, and brought him straight here. She's paying for everything."

She turned her head and saw an ill-favored man, closely cropped, with a broad-faced, pock-marked woman on his arm, ruddy with liquor and the satisfaction of being on the brink of a gratified desire. They jocosely saluted the outgoing couple, and went forward in front of Jude and Sue, whose diffidence was increasing. The latter drew back and turned to her lover, her mouth shaping itself like that of a child about to give way to grief:

"Jude—I don't like it here! I wish we hadn't come! The place gives me the horrors: it seems so unnatural as the climax of our love! I wish it had been at church, if it had to be at all. It is not so vulgar there."

"Dear little girl," said Jude, "how troubled and pale you look!"

"It must be performed here now, I suppose?"

"No—perhaps not necessarily."

He spoke to the clerk, and came back. "No; we need not marry here, or anywhere, unless we like, even now," he said. "We can be married in a church, if not with the same certificate, with another he'll give us, I think. Anyhow, let us go out till you are calmer, dear, and I too, and talk it over."

They went out stealthily and guiltily, as if they had committed a misdemeanor, closing the door without noise, and telling the widow, who had remained in the entry, to go home and await them; that they would call in any casual passers as witnesses, if necessary. When in the street they turned into an unfrequented side alley, where they walked up and down as they had done long ago in the Market-house at Melchester.

"Now, darling, what shall we do? We are making a

mess of it, it strikes me. Still, *anything* that pleases you will please me."

"But Jude, dearest, I am worrying you! You wanted it to be there, didn't you?"

"Well, to tell the truth, when I got inside I felt as if I didn't care much about it. The place depressed me almost as much as it did you; it was ugly. And then I thought of what you had said this morning as to whether we ought."

They walked on vaguely till she paused, and her little voice began anew: "It seems so weak, too, to vacillate like this! And yet how much better than to act rashly a second time. . . . How terrible that scene was to me! The expression in that flabby woman's face, leading her on to give herself to that jail-bird, not for a few hours, as she would, but for a lifetime, as she must. And the other poor soul—to escape a nominal shame which was owing to the weakness of her character, degrading herself to the real shame of bondage to a tyrant who scorned her—a man whom to avoid forever was her only chance of salvation. . . . This is our parish church, isn't it? This is where it would have to be if we did it in the usual way? A service or something seems to be going on."

Jude went up and looked in at the door. "Why, it is a wedding here too," he said. "Everybody seems to be on our tack to-day."

Sue said she supposed it was because Lent was just over, when there was always a crowd of marriages. "Let us listen," she said, "and find how it feels to us when performed in a church."

They stepped in, and entered a back seat, and watched the proceedings at the altar. The contracting couple appeared to belong to the well-to-do middle class, and the wedding altogether was of ordinary prettiness and interest. They could see the flowers tremble in the bride's hand, even at that distance, and could hear her mechanical murmur of words whose meaning her brain seemed to

gather not at all under the pressure of her self-consciousness. Sue and Jude listened, and severally saw themselves in time past going through the same form of self-committal.

"It is not the same to her, poor thing, as it would be to me doing it over again with my present knowledge," Sue whispered. "You see, they are fresh to it, and take the proceedings as a matter of course. But having been awakened to its awful solemnity as we have, or, at least, as I have, by experience, and to my own too squeamish feelings perhaps sometimes, it really does seem immoral in me to go and undertake the same thing again with open eyes. Coming in here and seeing this has frightened me from a church wedding as much as the other did from a registry one. . . . We are a weak, tremulous pair, Jude, and what others may feel confident in I feel doubts of — my being proof against the sordid conditions of a business contract again."

Then they tried to laugh, and went on debating in whispers the object-lesson before them. And Jude said he also thought they were both too thin-skinned; that they ought never to have been born, much less have come together for the most preposterous of all joint-ventures for *them*—matrimony.

His betrothed shuddered, and asked him earnestly if he indeed felt that they ought not to go in cold blood and sign that life-undertaking again. "It is awful if you think we have found ourselves not strong enough for it, and, knowing this, are proposing to perjure ourselves," she said.

"I fancy I do think it—since you ask me," said Jude. "Remember, I'll do it if you wish, own darling." While she hesitated he went on to confess that, though he thought they ought to be able to do it, he felt checked by the dread of incompetency, just as she did — from their peculiarities, perhaps, because they were unlike other people. "We are horribly sensitive; that's really what's the matter with us, Sue!" he declared.

"I fancy more are like us than we think!"

"Well, I don't know. The intention of the contract is good, and right for many, no doubt; but in our case it may defeat its own ends, because we are the queer sort of people we are — folk in whom domestic ties of a forced kind snuff out cordiality and spontaneousness."

Sue still held that there was nothing queer or exceptional in it—that all were so. "Everybody is getting to feel as we do. We are a little beforehand, that's all. In fifty, aye, twenty years, the descendants of these two will act and feel worse than we. They will see weltering humanity still more vividly than we do now, as

"'Shapes like our own selves hideously multiplied,'

and will be afraid to reproduce them."

"What a terrible line of poetry! . . . though I have felt it myself about my fellow-creatures at morbid times."

Thus they murmured on, till Sue said, more brightly:

"Well, the general question is not our business, and why should we plague ourselves about it? However different our reasons are, we come to the same conclusion: that for us particular two an irrevocable oath is risky. Then, Jude, let us go home without killing our dream! Yes? How good you are, my friend; you give way to all my whims!"

"They accord very much with my own."

He gave her a little kiss behind a pillar while the attention of everybody present was taken up in observing the bridal procession entering the vestry, and then they came outside the building. By the door they waited till two or three carriages, which had gone away for a while, returned, and the new husband and wife came into the open daylight. Sue sighed.

"The flowers in the bride's hand are sadly like the garland which decked the heifers of sacrifice in old times!"

"Still, Sue, it is no worse for the woman than for the

man. That's what some women fail to see; and instead of protesting against the conditions, they protest against the man, the other victim—just as a woman in a crowd will abuse the man who crushes against her, when he is only the helpless transmitter of the pressure put upon him."

"Yes; some are like that, instead of uniting with the man against the common enemy, coercion." The bride and bridegroom had by this time driven off, and the two moved away with the rest of the idlers. "No, don't let's do it," she continued—"at least, just now."

They reached home, and, passing the window arm-in-arm, saw the widow looking out at them. "Well," cried their guest, when they entered, "I said to myself when I zeed ye coming so loving up to the door, 'They made up their minds at last, then!'"

They briefly hinted that they had not.

"What! and ha'n't ye really done it? Chok' it all, that I should have lived to see a good old saying like 'marry in haste and repent at leisure' spoiled like this by you two! 'Tis time I got back again to Marygreen—sakes if tidden—if this is what the new notions be leading us to! Nobody thought o' being afeard o' matrimony in my time, nor of much else but a cannon-ball or empty cupboard! Why, when I and my poor man were married we thought no more o't than of a game o' dibs!"

"Don't tell the child when he comes in," whispered Sue, nervously. "He'll think it has all gone on right, and it will be better that he should not be surprised and puzzled. Of course, it is only put off for reconsideration. If we are happy as we are, what does it matter to anybody?"

V

THE purpose of a chronicler of moods and deeds does not require him to express his personal views upon the grave controversy above given. That the twain were happy—between their times of sadness—was indubitable. And when the unexpected apparition of Jude's child in the house had shown itself to be no such disturbing event as it had looked, but one that brought into their lives a new and tender interest of an ennobling and unselfish kind, it rather helped than injured their happiness.

To be sure, with such pleasing anxious beings as they were, the boy's coming also brought with it much thought for the future, particularly as he seemed at present to be singularly deficient in all the usual hopes of childhood. But the pair tried to dismiss, for a while at least, a too strenuously forward view.

There is in Upper Wessex an old town of nine or ten thousand souls; the town may be called Stoke-Barehills. It stands with its gaunt, unattractive, ancient church, and its new red brick suburb, amid the open, chalk-soiled cornlands, near the middle of an imaginary triangle which has for its three corners the towns of Aldbrickham and Wintoncester, and the important military station of Quartershot. The great western highway from London passes through it, near a point where the road branches into two, merely to unite again some twenty miles farther westward. Out of this bifurcation and reunion there used to arise among wheeled travellers, before railway days, endless questions of choice between the respective ways. But the question is now as dead as the scot-and-lot freeholder

the road wagoner, and the mail coachman who disputed it; and probably not a single inhabitant of Stoke-Barehills is now even aware that the two roads which part in his town ever meet again, for nobody now drives up and down the great western highway daily.

The most familiar object in Stoke-Barehills nowadays is its cemetery, standing among some picturesque mediæval ruins beside the railway; the modern chapels, modern tombs, and modern shrubs having a look of intrusiveness amid the crumbling and ivy-covered decay of the ancient walls.

On a certain day, however, in the particular year, which has now been reached by this narrative—the month being early June—the features of the town excite little interest, though many visitors arrive by the trains; some down trains, in especial, nearly emptying themselves here. It is the week of the Great Wessex Agricultural Show, whose vast encampment spreads over the open outskirts of the town like the tents of an investing army. Rows of marquees, huts, booths, pavilions, arcades, porticoes—every kind of structure short of a permanent one—cover the green field for the space of a square half-mile, and the crowds of arrivals walk through the town in a mass, and make straight for the exhibition ground. The way thereto is lined with shows, stalls, and hawkers on foot, who make a market-place of the whole roadway to the show proper, and lead some of the improvident to lighten their pockets appreciably before they reach the gates of the exhibition they came expressly to see.

It is the popular day, the shilling day, and of the fast-arriving excursion trains two from different directions enter the two contiguous railway-stations at almost the same minute. One, like several which have preceded it, comes from London, the other by a cross-line from Aldbrickham; and from the London train alights a couple: a short, rather bloated man, with a globular stomach and small legs, resembling a top on two pegs, accompanied

by a woman of rather fine figure and rather red face, dressed in black material, and covered with beads from bonnet to skirt, that made her glisten as if clad in chain-mail.

They cast their eyes around. The man was about to hire a fly, as some others had done, when the woman said, "Don't be in such a hurry, Cartlett. It isn't so very far to the show-yard. Let us walk down the street into the place. Perhaps I can pick up a cheap bit of furniture or old china. It is years since I was here—never since I lived as a girl at Aldbrickham, and used to come across for a trip sometimes with my young man."

"You can't carry home furniture by excursion train," said, in a thick voice, her husband, the landlord of The Three Horns, Lambeth; for they had both come down from the tavern in that "excellent, densely populated, gin-drinking neighborhood," which they had occupied ever since the advertisement in those words had attracted them thither. The configuration of the landlord showed that he, too, like his customers, was becoming affected by the liquors he retailed.

"Then I'll get it sent, if I can see any worth having," said his wife.

They sauntered on, but had barely entered the town when her attention was attracted by a young couple leading a child who had come out from the second platform, into which the train from Aldbrickham had steamed. They were walking just in front of the innkeepers.

"Sakes alive!" said Arabella.

"What's that?" said Cartlett.

"Who do you think that couple is? Don't you recognize the man?"

"No."

"Not from the photos I have shown you?"

"Is it Fawley?"

"Yes—of course."

"Oh, well. I suppose he was inclined for a little sight-

seeing like the rest of us." Cartlett's interest in Jude, whatever it might have been when Arabella was new to him, had plainly flagged since her charms and her idiosyncrasies, her supernumerary hair-coils, and her optional dimples were becoming as a tale that is told.

Arabella so regulated her pace and her husband's as to keep just in the rear of the other three, which it was easy to do without notice in such a stream of pedestrians. Her answers to Cartlett's remarks were vague and slight, for the group in front interested her more than all the rest of the spectacle.

"They are rather fond of one another and of their child, seemingly," continued the publican.

"*Their* child! 'Tisn't their child," said Arabella with a curious, sudden fierceness. "They haven't been married long enough for it to be theirs!"

But although the smouldering maternal instinct was strong enough in her to lead her to quash her husband's conjecture, she was not disposed on second thoughts to be more candid than necessary. Mr. Cartlett had no other idea than that his wife's child by her first husband was with his grandparents at the Antipodes.

"Oh, I suppose not. She looks quite a girl."

"They are only lovers, or lately married, and have the child in charge, as anybody can see."

All continued to move ahead. The unwitting Sue and Jude, the couple in question, had determined to make this Agricultural Exhibition within twenty miles of their own town the occasion of a day's excursion which should combine exercise and amusement with instruction, at small expense. Not regardful of themselves alone, they had taken care to bring Father Time, to try every means of making him kindle and laugh like other boys, though he was to some extent a hindrance to the delightfully unreserved intercourse in their pilgrimages which they so much enjoyed. But they soon ceased to consider him an observer, and went along with that tender attention to

each other which the shyest can scarcely disguise, and which these, among entire strangers as they imagined, took less trouble to disguise than they might have done at home. Sue, in her new summer clothes, flexible and light as a bird, her little thumb stuck up by the stem of her white cotton sunshade, went along as if she hardly touched ground, and as if a moderately strong puff of wind would float her over the hedge into the next field. Jude, in his light-gray holiday-suit, was really proud of her companionship, not more for her external attractiveness than for her sympathetic words and ways. That complete mutual understanding, in which every glance and movement was as effectual as speech for conveying intelligence between them, made them almost the two parts of a single whole.

The pair with their charge passed through the turnstiles, Arabella and her husband not far behind them. When inside the enclosure the publican's wife could see that the two ahead began to take trouble with the youngster, pointing out and explaining the many objects of interest, alive and dead; and a passing sadness would touch their faces at their every failure to disturb his indifference.

"How she sticks to him!" said Arabella. "Oh, no—I fancy they are not married, or they wouldn't be so much to one another as that. . . . I wonder!"

"But I thought you said he did marry her?"

"I heard he was going to — that's all, going to make another attempt, after putting it off once or twice. . . . As far as they themselves are concerned they are the only two in the show. I should be ashamed of making myself so silly if I were he!"

"I don't see as how there's anything remarkable in their behavior. I should never have noticed their being in love, if you hadn't said so."

"You never see anything," she rejoined. Nevertheless Cartlett's view of the lovers' or married pair's conduct was undoubtedly that of the general crowd, whose at-

tention seemed to be in no way attracted by what Arabella's sharpened vision discerned.

"He's charmed by her as if she were some fairy!" continued Arabella. "See how he looks round at her, and lets his eyes rest on her. I am inclined to think that she don't care for him quite so much as he does for her. She's not a particular warm-hearted creature to my thinking, though she cares for him pretty middling much—as much as she's able to; and he could make her heart ache a bit if he liked to try — which he's too simple to do. There — now they are going across to the cart-horse sheds. Come along."

"I don't want to see the cart-horses. It is no business of ours to follow these two. If we have come to see the show let us see it in our own way, as they do in theirs."

"Well — suppose we agree to meet somewhere in an hour's time—say at that refreshment tent over there, and go about independent? Then you can look at what you choose to, and so can I."

Cartlett was not loath to agree to this, and they parted—he proceeding to the shed where malting processes were being exhibited, and Arabella in the direction taken by Jude and Sue. Before, however, she had regained their wake a laughing face met her own, and she was confronted by Anny, the friend of her girlhood.

Anny had burst out in hearty laughter at the mere fact of the chance rencounter. "I be still living down there," she said, as soon as she was composed. "I am soon going to be married, but my intended couldn't come up here to-day. But there's lots of us come by excursion, though I've lost the rest of 'em for the present."

"Have you met Jude and his young woman, or wife, or whatever she is? I saw 'em by now."

"No. Not a glimpse of un for years!"

"Well, they are close by here somewhere. Yes—there they are—by that gray horse!"

"Oh, that's his present young woman—wife did you say? Has he married again?"

"I don't know."

"She's pretty, isn't she."

"Yes—nothing to complain of; or jump at. Not much to depend on, though; a slim, fidgety little thing like that."

"He's a nice-looking chap, too. You ought to ha' stuck to un, Arabella."

"I don't know but I ought," murmured she.

Anny laughed. "That's you, Arabella. Always wanting another man than your own."

"Well, and what woman don't, I should like to know? As for that body with him—she don't know what love is—at least what I call love! I can see in her face she don't."

"And perhaps, Abby dear, you don't know what she calls love."

"I'm sure I don't wish to! . . . Ah—they are making for the Art Department. I should like to see some pictures myself. Suppose we go that way? Why, if all Wessex isn't here, I verily believe! There's Dr. Vilbert. Haven't seen him for years, and he's not looking a day older than when I used to know him. How do you do, Physician? I was just saying that you don't look a day older than when you knew me as a girl."

"Simply the result of taking my own pills regular, ma'am. Only two and threepence a box—warranted efficacious by the Government stamp. Now let me advise you to purchase the same immunity from the ravages of Time by following my example? Only two-and-three."

The physician had produced a box from his waistcoat pocket, and Arabella was induced to make the purchase.

"At the same time," continued he, when the pills were paid for, "you have the advantage of me, Mrs.— Surely

not Mrs. Fawley, once Miss Donn, of the vicinity of Marygreen?"

"Yes. But Mrs. Cartlett now."

"Ah—you lost him, then? Promising young fellow! A pupil of mine, you know. I taught him the dead languages. And believe me, he soon knew nearly as much as I."

"I lost him; but not as you think," said Arabella, dryly. "The lawyers untied us. There he is, look, alive and lusty; along with that young woman, entering the Art exhibition."

"Ah—dear me! Fond of her, apparently."

"They *say* they are cousins."

"Cousinship is a great convenience to their feelings, I should say?"

"Yes. So her husband thought, no doubt, when he divorced her. . . . Shall we look at the pictures, too?"

The trio followed across the green and entered. Jude and Sue, with the child, unaware of the interest they were exciting, had gone up to a model at one end of the building, which they regarded with considerable attention for a long while before they went on. Arabella and her friends came to it in due course, and the inscription it bore was: "Model of Cardinal College, Christminster; by J. Fawley and S. F. M. Bridehead."

"Admiring their own work," said Arabella. "How like Jude—always thinking of colleges and Christminster instead of attending to his business!"

They glanced cursorily at the pictures, and proceeded to the band-stand. When they had stood a little while listening to the music of the military performers, Jude, Sue, and the child came up on the other side. Arabella did not care if they should recognize her; but they were too deeply absorbed in their own lives, as translated into emotion by the military band, to perceive her under her beaded veil. She walked round the outside of the listening throng, passing behind the lovers, whose movements

had an unexpected fascination for her to-day. Scrutinizing them narrowly from the rear, she noticed that Jude's hand sought Sue's as they stood, the two standing close together so as to conceal, as they supposed, this tacit expression of their mutual responsiveness.

"Silly fools—like two children!" Arabella whispered to herself, morosely, as she rejoined her companions, with whom she preserved a preoccupied silence.

Anny meanwhile had jokingly remarked to Vilbert on Arabella's hankering interest in her first husband.

"Now," said the physician to Arabella, apart, "do you want anything such as this, Mrs. Cartlett? It is not compounded out of my regular pharmacopœia, but I am sometimes asked for such a thing." He produced a small phial of clear liquid. "A love-philter, such as was used by the Ancients with great effect. I found it out by study of their writings, and have never known it to fail."

"What is it made of?" asked Arabella, curiously.

"Well—a distillation of the juices of doves' hearts—otherwise pigeons'—is one of the ingredients. It took nearly a hundred hearts to produce that small bottleful."

"How do you get pigeons enough?"

"To tell a secret, I get a piece of rock-salt, of which pigeons are inordinately fond, and place it in a dovecote on my roof. In a few hours the birds come to it from all points of the compass—east, west, north, and south—and thus I secure as many as I require. You use the liquid by contriving that the desired man shall take about ten drops of it in his drink. But remember, all this is told you because I gather from your questions that you mean to be a purchaser. You must keep faith with me."

"Very well—I don't mind a bottle—to give some friend or other to try it on her young man." She produced five shillings, the price asked, and slipped the phial in her capacious bosom. Saying presently that she was due at an appointment with her husband, she sauntered away towards the refreshment bar, Jude, his cousin, and the child

having gone on to the horticultural tent, where Arabella caught a glimpse of them standing before a group of roses in bloom.

She waited a few minutes observing them, and then proceeded to join her spouse with no very amiable sentiments. She found him seated on a stool by the bar, talking to one of the gayly-dressed maids who had served him with spirits.

"I should think you had enough of this business at home!" Arabella remarked, gloomily. "Surely you didn't come fifty miles from your own bar to go into another? Come, take me round the show, as other men do their wives! Dammy, one would think you were a young bachelor, with nobody to look after but yourself!"

"But we agreed to meet here; and what could I do but wait?"

"Well, now we have met, come along," she returned, ready to quarrel with the sun for shining on her. And they left the tent together, this pot-bellied man and florid woman, in the antipathetic, recriminatory mood of the average husband and wife of Christendom.

In the meantime the more exceptional couple and the boy still lingered in the pavilion of flowers—an enchanted palace to their appreciative taste—Sue's usually pale cheeks reflecting the pink of the tinted roses at which she gazed; for the gay sights, the air, the music, and the excitement of a day's outing with Jude had quickened her blood and made her eyes sparkle with vivacity. She adored roses, and what Arabella had witnessed was Sue detaining Jude almost against his will while she learned the names of this variety and that, and put her face within an inch of their blooms to smell them.

"I should like to push my face quite into them—the dears!" she had said. "But I suppose it is against the rules to touch them—isn't it, Jude?"

"Yes, you baby," said he; and then playfully gave her a little push, so that her nose went among the petals.

"The policeman will be down on us, and I shall say it was my husband's fault."

Then she looked up at him, and smiled in a way that told so much to Arabella.

"Happy?" he murmured.

She nodded.

"Why? Because you have come to the great Wessex Agricultural Show—or because *we* have come?"

"You are always trying to make me confess to all sorts of absurdities. Because I am improving my mind, of course, by seeing all these steam-ploughs, and threshing-machines, and chaff-cutters, and cows, and pigs, and sheep."

Jude was quite content with a baffle from his ever-evasive companion. But when he had forgotten that he had put the question, and because he no longer wished for an answer, she went on: "I feel that we have returned to Greek joyousness, and have blinded ourselves to sickness and sorrow, and have forgotten what twenty-five centuries have taught the race since their time, as one of your Christminster luminaries says. . . . There is one immediate shadow, however—only one." And she looked at the aged child, whom, though they had taken him to everything likely to attract a young intelligence, they had utterly failed to interest.

He knew what they were saying and thinking. "I am very, very sorry, father and mother," he said. "But please don't mind! I can't help it. I should like the flowers very, very much, if I didn't keep on thinking they'd be all withered in a few days!"

VI

The unnoticed lives that the pair had hitherto led began, from the day of the suspended wedding onward, to be observed and discussed by other persons than Arabella. The society of Spring Street and the neighborhood generally did not understand, and probably could not have been made to understand, Sue and Jude's private minds, emotions, positions, and fears. The curious facts of a child coming to them unexpectedly, who called Jude father, and Sue mother, and a hitch in a marriage ceremony intended for quietness to be performed at a registrar's office, together with rumors of the undefended cases in the law-courts, bore only one translation to plain minds.

Little Time—for though he was formally turned into "Jude," the apt nickname stuck to him — would come home from school in the evening, and repeat inquiries and remarks that had been made to him by the other boys; and cause Sue, and Jude when he heard them, a great deal of pain and sadness.

The result was that shortly after the attempt at the registrar's the pair went off—to London it was believed—for several days, hiring somebody to look to the boy. When they came back they let it be understood indirectly, and with total indifference and weariness of mien, that they were legally married at last. Sue, who had previously been called Mrs. Bridehead, now openly adopted the name of Mrs. Fawley. Her dull, cowed, and listless manner for days seemed to substantiate all this.

But the mistake (as it was called) of their going away

so secretly to do the business kept up much of the mystery of their lives; and they found that they made not such advances with their neighbors as they had expected to do thereby. A living mystery was not much less interesting than a dead scandal.

The baker's lad and the grocer's boy, who at first had used to lift their hats gallantly to Sue, when they came to execute their errands, in these days no longer took the trouble to render her that homage, and the neighboring artisans' wives looked straight along the pavement when they encountered her.

Nobody molested them, it is true; but an oppressive atmosphere began to encircle their souls, particularly after their excursion to the Show, as if that visit had brought some evil influence to bear on them. And their temperaments were precisely of a kind to suffer from this atmosphere, and to be indisposed to lighten it by vigorous and open statements. Their apparent attempt at reparation had come too late to be effective.

The head-stone and epitaph orders fell off; and two or three months later, when autumn came, Jude perceived that he would have to return to journey-work again, a course all the more unfortunate just now, in that he had not as yet cleared off the debt he had unavoidably incurred in the payment of the law-costs of the previous year.

One evening he sat down to share the common meal with Sue and the child as usual. "I am thinking," he said to her, "that I'll hold on here no longer. The life suits us, certainly; but if we could get away to a place where we are unknown, we should be lighter-hearted, and have a better chance. And so I am afraid we must break it up here, however awkward for you, poor dear!"

Sue was always much affected at a picture of herself as an object of pity, and a tear came at this.

"Well—I am not sorry," said she, presently. "I am much depressed by the way they look at me here. And

you have been keeping on this house and furniture entirely for me and the boy! You don't want it yourself, and the expense is unnecessary. But whatever we do, wherever we go, you won't take him away from me, Jude dear? I could not let him go now! The cloud upon his young mind makes him so pathetic to me; I do hope to lift it some day! And he loves me so. You won't take him away from me?"

"Certainly I won't, dear little girl! We'll get nice lodgings, wherever we go. I shall be moving about, probably—getting a job here and a job there."

"I shall do something, too, of course, till—till— Well, now I can't be useful in the lettering, it behooves me to turn my hand to something else."

"Don't hurry about getting employment," he said, regretfully. "I don't want you to do that. I wish you wouldn't, Sue. The boy and yourself are enough for you to attend to."

There was a knock at the door, and Jude answered it. Sue could hear the conversation:

"Is Mr. Fawley at home? . . . Biles & Willis, the building contractors, sent me to know if you'll undertake the relettering of the Ten Commandments in a little church they've been restoring lately in the country near here."

Jude reflected, and said he could undertake it.

"It is not a very artistic job," continued the messenger. "The clergyman is a very old-fashioned chap, and he has refused to let anything more be done to the church than cleaning and repairing."

"Excellent old man!" said Sue to herself, who was sentimentally opposed to the horrors of over-restoration.

"The Ten Commandments are fixed to the east end," the messenger went on, "and they want doing up with the rest of the wall there, since he won't have them carted off as old materials belonging to the contractor, in the usual way of the trade."

A bargain as to terms was struck, and Jude came indoors. "There, you see," he said, cheerfully. "One more job yet, at any rate, and you can help in it—at least, you can try. We shall have all the church to ourselves, as the rest of the work is finished."

Next day Jude went out to the church, which was only two miles off. He found that what the contractor's clerk had said was true. The tables of the Jewish law towered sternly over the utensils of Christian grace, as the chief ornament of the chancel end, in the fine dry style of the last century. And as their framework was constructed of ornamental plaster, they could not be taken down for repair. A portion, crumbled by damp, required renewal; and when this had been done, and the whole cleansed, he began to renew the lettering. On the second morning Sue came to see what assistance she could render, and also because they liked to be together.

The silence and emptiness of the building gave her confidence, and, standing on a safe low platform erected by Jude, which she was nevertheless timid at mounting, she began painting in the letters of the first Table while he set about mending a portion of the second. She was quite pleased at her powers; she had acquired them in the days she painted illumined texts for the church-fitting shop at Christminster. Nobody seemed likely to disturb them; and the pleasant twitter of birds, and rustle of October leafage, came in through an open window, and mingled with their talk.

They were not, however, to be left thus snug and peaceful for long. About half-past twelve there came footsteps on the gravel without. The old vicar and his churchwarden entered, and, coming up to see what was being done, seemed surprised to discover that a young woman was assisting. They passed on into an aisle, at which time the door again opened, and another figure entered—a small one, that of little Time, who was crying. She had told him where he might find her between school-hours,

if he wished. She came down from her perch, and said, "What's the matter, my dear?"

"I couldn't stay to eat my dinner in school, because they said—" He described how some boys had taunted him about his nominal mother, and Sue, grieved, expressed her indignation to Jude aloft. The child went into the churchyard, and Sue returned to her work. Meanwhile the door had opened again, and there shuffled in, with a business-like air, the white-aproned woman who cleaned the church. Sue recognized her as one who had friends in Spring Street, whom she visited. The church-cleaner looked at Sue, gaped, and lifted her hands; she had evidently recognized Jude's companion as the latter had recognized her. Next came two ladies, and, after talking to the char-woman, they also moved forward, and, as Sue stood reaching upward, watched her hand tracing the letters, and critically regarded her person in relief against the white wall, till she grew so nervous that she trembled visibly.

They went back to where the others were standing, talking in undertones: and one said—Sue could not hear which: "She's his wife, I suppose?"

"Some say Yes: some say No," was the reply from the char-woman.

"Not? Then she ought to be, or somebody's—that's very clear!"

"They've only been married a very few weeks, whether or no."

"A strange pair to be painting the Two Tables! I wonder Biles and Willis could think of such a thing as hiring those!"

The church-warden supposed that Biles and Willis knew of nothing wrong, and then the other, who had been talking to the old woman, explained what she meant by calling them strange people.

The probable drift of the subdued conversation which followed was made plain by the church-warden breaking

into an anecdote, in a voice that everybody in the church could hear, though obviously suggested by the present situation:

"Well, now, it is a curious thing, but my grandfather told me a strange tale of a most immoral case that happened at the painting of the Commandments in a church out by Gaymead—which is quite within a walk of this one. In them days Commandments were mostly done in gilt letters on a black ground, and that's how they were out where I say, before the owld church was rebuilded. It must have been somewhere about a hundred years ago that them Commandments wanted doing up, just as ours do here, and they had to get men from Aldbrickham to do 'em. Now they wished to get the job finished by a particular Sunday, so the men had to work late Saturday night, against their will, for over-time was not paid then as 'tis now. There was no true religion in the country at that date, neither among pa'sons, clerks, nor people, and to keep the men up to their work the vicar had to let 'em have plenty of drink during the afternoon. As evening drawed on they sent for some more themselves; rum, by all account. It got later and later, and they got more and more fuddled, till at last they went a-putting their rum-bottle and rummers upon the Communion-table, and drawed up a trestle or two, and sate round comfortable, and poured out again right hearty bumpers. No sooner had they tossed off their glasses than, so the story goes, they fell down senseless, one and all. How long they bode so they didn't know, but when they came to themselves there was a terrific thunder-storm a-raging, and they seemed to see in the gloom a dark figure with very thin legs and a curious voot, a-standing on the ladder, and finishing their work. When it got daylight they could see that the work was really finished, and couldn't at all mind finishing it themselves. They went home, and the next thing they heard was that a great scandal had been caused in the church that Sunday morning, for

when the people came and service began, all saw that the Ten Commandments wez painted with the 'Nots' left out. Decent people wouldn't attend service there for a long time, and the Bishop had to be sent for to reconsecrate the church. That's the tradition as I used to hear it as a child. You must take it for what it is wo'th, but this case to-day has reminded me o't, as I say."

The visitors gave one more glance, as if to see whether Jude and Sue had left the Nots out likewise, and then severally left the church, even the old woman at last. Sue and Jude, who had not stopped working, sent back the child to school, and remained without speaking, till, looking at her narrowly, he found she had been crying silently.

"Never mind, comrade!" he said. "I know what it is!"

"I can't *bear* that they, and everybody, should think people wicked because they may have chosen to live their own way! It is really these opinions that make the best-intentioned people reckless, and actually become immoral!"

"Never be cast down! It was only a funny story."

"Ah, but we suggested it! I am afraid I have done you mischief, Jude, instead of helping you by coming!"

To have suggested such a story was certainly not very exhilarating, in a serious view of their position. However, in a few minutes Sue seemed to see that their position this morning had a ludicrous side, and, wiping her eyes, she laughed.

"It is droll, after all," she said, "that we two, of all people, with our queer history, should happen to be here doing this! You a reprobate, and I—in my condition. . . . Oh, dear!". . . And with her hand over her eyes she laughed again silently and intermittently, till she was quite weak.

"That's better," said Jude, gayly. "Now we are right again, aren't we, little girl?"

"Oh, but it is serious, all the same!" she sighed, as she took up the brush and righted herself. "But do you see they don't think we are married? They *won't* believe it! It is extraordinary!"

"I don't care whether they think so or not," said Jude. "I sha'n't take any more trouble to make them."

They sat down to lunch—which they had brought with them, not to hinder time—and, having eaten it, were about to set to work anew, when a man entered the church, and Jude recognized in him the contractor Willis. He beckoned to Jude, and spoke to him apart.

"Here, I've just had a complaint about this," he said, with rather breathless awkwardness. "I don't wish to go into the matter—as, of course, I didn't know what was going on—but I am afraid I must ask you and her to leave off, and let somebody else finish this! It is best, to avoid all unpleasantness. I'll pay you for the week, all the same."

Jude was too independent to make any fuss, and the contractor paid him and left. Jude picked up his tools, and Sue cleansed her brush. Then their eyes met.

"How could we—be so simple—as to suppose we might do this!" said she, dropping to her tragic note. "Of course we ought not—I ought not—to have come!"

"I had no idea that anybody was going to intrude into such a lonely place and see us!" Jude returned. "Well, it can't be helped, dear; and, of course, I wouldn't wish to injure Willis's trade-connection by staying." They sat down passively for a few minutes, proceeded out of the church, and, overtaking the boy, pursued their thoughtful way to Aldbrickham.

Fawley had still a pretty zeal in the cause of education, and, as was natural with his experiences, he was active in furthering "equality of opportunity" by any humble means open to him. He had joined an Artisans' Mutual Improvement Society, established in the town about the time of his arrival there; its members being young men

of all creeds and denominations, including Churchmen, Congregationalists, Baptists, Unitarians, Positivists, and others—Agnostics had scarcely been heard of at this time —their one common wish to enlarge their minds forming a sufficiently close bond of union. The subscription was small, and the room homely; and Jude's activity, uncustomary acquirements, and, above all, singular intuition on what to read and how to set about it—begotten of his years of struggle against malignant stars—had led to his being placed on the committee.

A few evenings after his dismissal from the church repairs, and before he had obtained any more work to do, he went to attend a meeting of the aforesaid committee. It was late when he arrived; all the others had come, and as he entered they looked dubiously at him, and hardly uttered a word of greeting. He guessed that something bearing on himself had been either discussed or mooted. Some ordinary business was transacted, and it was disclosed that the number of subscriptions had shown a sudden falling off for that quarter. One member—a really well-meaning and upright man—began speaking in enigmas about certain possible causes: that it behooved them to look well into their constitution; for if the committee were not respected, and had not at least, in their differences, a common standard of *conduct*, they would bring the institution to the ground. Nothing further was said in Jude's presence, but he knew what this meant; and, turning to the table, wrote a note resigning his office there and then.

Thus the supersensitive couple were more and more impelled to go away. And then bills were sent in, and the question arose, what could Jude do with his great-aunt's heavy old furniture if he left the town to travel he knew not whither? This, and the necessity of ready money, compelled him to decide on an auction, much as he would have preferred to keep the venerable goods.

The day of the sale came on, and Sue for the last time

cooked her own, the child's, and Jude's breakfast in the little house he had furnished. It chanced to be a wet day; moreover, Sue was unwell, and not wishing to desert her poor Jude in such gloomy circumstances, for he was compelled to stay a while, she acted on the suggestion of the auctioneer's man, and ensconced herself in an upper room, which could be emptied of its effects, and so kept closed to the bidders. Here Jude discovered her; and with the child, and their few trunks, baskets, and bundles, and two chairs and a table that were not in the sale, the two sat in meditative talk.

Footsteps began stamping up and down the bare stairs, the comers inspecting the goods, some of which were of so quaint and ancient a make as to acquire an adventitious value as art. Their door was tried once or twice, and to guard themselves against intrusion Jude wrote "Private" on a scrap of paper, and stuck it upon the panel.

They soon found that, instead of the furniture, their own personal histories and past conduct began to be discussed to an unexpected and intolerable extent by the intending bidders. It was not till now that they really discovered what a fool's paradise of supposed unrecognition they had been living in of late. Sue silently took her companion's hand, and with eyes on each other they heard these passing remarks—the quaint and mysterious personality of Father Time being a subject which formed a large ingredient in the hints and innuendoes. At length the auction began in the room below, whence they could hear each familiar article knocked down, the highly prized ones cheaply, the unconsidered at an unexpected price.

"People don't understand us," he sighed, heavily. "I am glad we have decided to go."

"The question is, where to?"

"It ought to be to London. There one can live as one chooses."

"No—not London, dear! I know it well. We should be unhappy there."

"Why?"

"Can't you think?"

"Because Arabella is there?"

"That's the chief reason."

"But in the country I shall always be uneasy lest there should be some more of our late experience. And I don't care to lessen it by explaining, for one thing, all about the boy's history. To cut him off from his past I have determined to keep silence. I am sickened of ecclesiastical work now, and I shouldn't like to accept it if offered me!"

"You ought to have learned Classic. Gothic is barbaric art, after all. Pugin was wrong, and Wren was right. Remember the interior of Christminster Cathedral—almost the first place in which we looked in each other's faces. Under the picturesqueness of those Norman details one can see the grotesque childishness of uncouth people trying to imitate the vanished Roman forms, remembered by dim tradition only."

"Yes, you have half converted me to that view by what you have said before. But one can work, and despise what one does. I must do something, if not church-gothic."

"I wish we could both follow an occupation in which personal circumstances don't count," she said, smiling up wistfully. "I am as disqualified for teaching as you are for ecclesiastical art. You must fall back upon railway stations, bridges, theatres, music-halls, hotels—everything that has no connection with conduct."

"I am not skilled in those. . . . I ought to take to bread-baking. I grew up in the baking business with aunt, you know. But even a baker must be conventional to get customers."

"Unless he keeps a cake and gingerbread stall at markets and fairs, where people are gloriously indifferent to everything except the quality of the goods."

Their thoughts were diverted by the voice of the auctioneer: "Now this antique oak settle—a unique example of old English furniture, worthy the attention of all collectors."

"That was my great-grandfather's," said Jude. "I wish we could have kept the poor old thing!"

One by one the articles went, and the afternoon passed away. Jude and the other two were getting tired and hungry, but after the conversation they had heard they were shy of going out while the purchasers were in their line of retreat. However, the later lots drew on, and it became necessary to emerge into the rain soon, to take on Sue's things to their temporary lodging.

"Now the next lot: two pairs of pigeons, all alive and plump — a nice pie for somebody for next Sunday's dinner."

The impending sale of these birds had been the most trying suspense of the whole afternoon. They were Sue's pets, and when it was found that they could not possibly be kept, more sadness was caused than by parting from all the furniture. Sue tried to think away her tears as she heard the trifling sum that her dears were deemed to be worth advanced by small stages to the price at which they were finally knocked down. The purchaser was a neighboring poulterer, and they were unquestionably doomed to die before the next market-day.

Seeing her dissembled distress Jude kissed her, and said it was time to go and see if the lodgings were ready. He would go on with the boy, and fetch her soon.

When she was left alone she waited patiently, but Jude did not come back. At last she started, the coast being clear, and on passing the poulterer's shop, not far off, she saw her pigeons in a hamper by the door. An emotion at sight of them, assisted by the growing dusk of evening, caused her to act on impulse, and first looking around her quickly, she pulled out the peg which fastened down the cover, and went on. The cover was lifted from within,

and the pigeons flew away with a clatter that brought the chagrined poulterer cursing and swearing to the door.

Sue reached the lodging trembling, and found Jude and the boy making it comfortable for her. "Do the buyers pay before they bring away the things?" she asked, breathlessly.

"Yes, I think. Why?"

"Because, then, I've done such a wicked thing!" And she explained, in bitter contrition.

"I shall have to pay the poulterer for them if he doesn't catch them," said Jude. "But never mind. Don't fret about it, dear."

"It was so foolish of me! Oh, why should Nature's law be mutual butchery!"

"Is it so, mother?" asked the boy, intently.

"Yes!" said Sue, vehemently.

"Well, they must take their chance, now, poor things," said Jude. "As soon as the sale-account is wound up, and our bills paid, we go."

"Where do we go to?" asked Time, in suspense.

"We must sail under sealed orders, that nobody may trace us. . . . We mustn't go to Alfredston, or to Melchester, or to Shaston, or to Christminster. Apart from those we may go anywhere."

"Why mustn't we go there, father?"

"Because of a cloud that has gathered over us; though 'we have wronged no man, corrupted no man, defrauded no man!' Though perhaps we have 'done that which was right in our own eyes.'"

VII

FROM that week Jude Fawley and Sue walked no more in the town of Aldbrickham.

Whither they had gone nobody knew, chiefly because nobody cared to know. Any one sufficiently curious to trace the steps of such an obscure pair might have discovered without great trouble that they had taken advantage of his adaptive craftsmanship to enter on a shifting, almost nomadic, life, which was not without its pleasantness for a time.

Wherever Jude heard of freestone work to be done thither he went, choosing by preference places remote from his old haunts and Sue's. He labored at a job, long or briefly, till it was finished, and then moved on.

Two whole years and a half passed thus. Sometimes he might have been found shaping the mullions of a country mansion, sometimes setting the parapet of a town-hall, sometimes ashlaring a hotel at Sandbourne, sometimes a museum at Casterbridge, sometimes as far down as Exonbury, sometimes at Stoke-Barehills. Later still he was at Kennetbridge, a thriving town not more than a dozen miles south of Marygreen, this being his nearest approach to the village where he was known; for he had a sensitive dread of being questioned as to his life and fortunes by those who had been acquainted with him during his ardent young manhood of study and promise, and his brief and unhappy married life at that time.

At some of these places he would be detained for months, at others only a few weeks. His curious and sudden antipathy to ecclesiastical work, both episcopal

and non-conformist, which had risen in him when suffering under a smarting sense of misconception, remained with him in cold blood, less from any fear of renewed censure than from an ultra-conscientiousness which would not allow him to seek a living out of those who would disapprove of his ways; also, too, from a sense of inconsistency between his former dogmas and his present practice, hardly a shred of the beliefs with which he had first gone up to Christminster now remaining with him. He was mentally approaching the position which Sue had occupied when he first met her.

On a Saturday evening in May, nearly three years after Arabella's recognition of Sue and himself at the Agricultural Show, some of those who there encountered each other met again.

It was the spring fair at Kennetbridge, and, though this ancient trade-meeting had much dwindled from its dimensions of former times, the long, straight street of the borough presented a lively scene about mid-day. At this hour a light trap, among other vehicles, was driven into the town by the north road, and up to the door of a temperance inn. There alighted two women, one the driver, an ordinary country person, the other a finely built figure in the deep mourning of a widow. Her sombre suit, of pronounced cut, caused her to appear a little out of place in the medley and bustle of a provincial fair.

"I will just find out where it is, Anny," said the widow-lady to her companion, when the horse and cart had been taken by a man who came forward, "and then I'll come back and meet you here, and we'll go in and have something to eat and drink. I begin to feel quite a sinking."

"With all my heart," said the other, "though I would sooner have put up at the Checkers or The Jack. You can't get much at these temperance houses."

"Now, don't you give way to gluttonous desires, my child," said the woman in weeds, reprovingly. "This is

the proper place. Very well; we'll meet in half an hour, unless you come with me to find out where the site of the new chapel is."

"I don't care to. You can tell me."

The companions then went their several ways, the one in crape walking firmly along with a mien of disconnection from her miscellaneous surroundings. Making inquiries, she came to a hoarding, within which were excavations denoting the foundations of a building; and on the boards without one or two large posters announcing that the foundation-stone of the chapel about to be erected would be laid that afternoon at three o'clock by a London preacher of great popularity among his body.

Having ascertained thus much, the immensely weeded widow retraced her steps, and gave herself leisure to observe the movements of the fair. By-and-by her attention was arrested by a little stall of cakes and gingerbreads, standing between the more pretentious erections of trestles and canvas. It was covered with an immaculate cloth, and tended by a young woman apparently unused to the business, she being accompanied by a boy with an octogenarian face, who assisted her.

"Upon my—senses!" murmured the widow to herself. "His wife Sue—if she is so!" She drew nearer to the stall. "How do you do, Mrs. Fawley?" she said, blandly.

Sue changed color, and recognized Arabella through the crape veil.

"How are you, Mrs. Cartlett?" she said, stiffly. And then, perceiving Arabella's garb, her voice grew sympathetic in spite of herself. "What! you have lost—"

"My poor husband. Yes. He died suddenly, six weeks ago, leaving me none too well off, though he was a kind husband to me. But whatever profit there is in public-house keeping goes to them that brew the liquors, and not to them that retail 'em. . . . And you, my little old man! You don't know me, I expect?"

"Yes, I do. You be the woman I thought wer my mother for a bit, till I found you wasn't," replied Father Time, who had learned to use the Wessex tongue quite naturally by now.

"All right. Never mind. I am a friend."

"Juey," said Sue, suddenly, "go down to the station platform with this tray—there's another train coming in, I think."

When he was gone Arabella continued: "He'll never be a beauty, will he, poor chap! Does he know I am his mother really?"

"No. He thinks there is some mystery about his parentage—that's all. Jude is going to tell him when he is a little older."

"But how do you come to be doing this? I am surprised."

"It is only a temporary occupation — a fancy of ours while we are in a difficulty."

"Then you are living with him still?"

"Yes."

"Married?"

"Of course."

"Any children?"

"Two."

"And another coming soon, I see."

Sue writhed under the hard and direct questioning, and her tender little mouth began to quiver.

"Lord — I mean goodness gracious—what is there to cry about? Some folks would be proud enough!"

"It is not that I am ashamed—not as you think! But it seems such a terribly tragic thing to bring beings into the world—so presumptuous — that I question my right to do it sometimes!"

"Take it easy, my dear. . . . But you don't tell me why you do such a thing as this? Jude used to be a proud sort of chap—above any business almost, leave alone keeping a standing."

"Perhaps my husband has altered a little since then. I am not sure he is not proud now," and Sue's lips quivered again. "I am doing this because he caught a chill early in the year while putting up some stone-work of a music-hall at Quartershot, which he had to do in the rain, the work having to be executed by a fixed day. He is better than he was; but it has been a long, weary time! We have had an old widow friend with us to help us through it; but she's leaving soon."

"Well, I am respectable too, thank God, and of a serious way of thinking since my loss. Why did you choose to sell gingerbreads?"

"That's a pure accident. He was brought up to the baking business, and it occurred to him to try his hand at these, which he can make without coming out-of-doors. We call them Christminster cakes. They are a great success."

"I never saw any like 'em. Why, they are windows and towers and pinnacles! And upon my word, they are very nice." She had helped herself, and was unceremoniously munching one of the cakes.

"Yes. They are reminiscences of the Christminster Colleges. Traceried windows and cloisters, you see. It was a whim of his to do them in pastry."

"Still harping on Christminster—even in his cakes!" laughed Arabella. "Just like Jude. A ruling passion. What a queer fellow he is, and always will be!"

Sue sighed, and she looked her distress at hearing him criticised.

"Don't you think he is? Come, now, you do, though you are so fond of him!"

"Of course Christminster is a sort of fixed vision with him, which I suppose he'll never be cured of believing in. He still thinks it a great centre of high and fearless thought, instead of what it is—a nest of commonplace school-masters, whose characteristic is timid obsequiousness to tradition."

Arabella was quizzing Sue with more regard of how she was speaking than of what she was saying. "How odd to hear a woman selling cakes talk like that!" she said. "Why don't you go back to school-keeping?"

Sue shook her head. "They won't have me."

"Because of the divorce, I suppose?"

"That, and other things. And there is no reason to wish it. We gave up all ambition, and were never so happy in our lives till his illness came."

"Where are you living?"

"I don't care to say."

"Here in Kennetbridge?"

Sue's manner showed Arabella that her random guess was right.

"Here comes the boy back again," continued Arabella. "My boy and Jude's!"

Sue's eyes darted a spark. "You needn't throw that in my face!" she cried.

"Very well; though I half feel as if I should like to have him with me! . . . But, Lord, I don't want to take him from 'ee—ever I should sin to speak so profane—though I should think you must have enough of your own! He's in very good hands, that I know; and I am not the woman to find fault with what the Lord has ordained. I've reached a more resigned frame of mind."

"Indeed! I wish I had been able to do so."

"You should try," replied the widow, from the serene heights of a mind conscious not only of spiritual but of social superiority. "I make no boast of my awakening, but I'm not what I was. After Cartlett's death I was passing the chapel in the street next ours, and went into it for shelter from a shower of rain. I felt a need of some sort of support under my loss, and, as 'twas righter than gin, I took to going there regular, and found it a great comfort. But I've left London now, you know, and at present I am living at Alfredston, with my friend Anny, to be near my own old country. I'm not come here to

the fair to-day. There's to be the foundation-stone of a new chapel laid this afternoon by a popular London preacher, and I drove over with Anny. Now I must go back to meet her."

Then Arabella wished Sue good-bye, and went on.

VIII

In the afternoon Sue and the other people bustling about Kennetbridge fair could hear singing inside the placarded hoarding farther down the street. Those who peeped through the opening saw a crowd of persons in broadcloth, with hymn-books in their hands, standing round the excavations for the new chapel walls. Arabella Cartlett and her weeds stood among them. She had a clear, powerful voice, which could be distinctly heard with the rest, rising and falling to the tune, her inflated bosom being also seen doing likewise.

It was two hours later on the same day that Anny and Mrs. Cartlett, having had tea at the Temperance Hotel, started on their return journey across the high and open country which stretches between Kennetbridge and Alfredston. Arabella was in a thoughtful mood; but her thoughts were not of the new chapel, as Anny at first surmised.

"No—it is something else," at last said Arabella, sullenly. "I came here to-day never thinking of anybody but poor Cartlett, or of anything but spreading the Gospel by means of this new tabernacle they've begun this afternoon. But something has happened to turn my mind another way quite. Anny, I've heard of un again, and I've seen *her!*"

"Who?"

"I've heard of Jude, and I've seen his wife. And ever since, do what I will, and though I sung the hymns wi' all my strength, I have not been able to help thinking about 'n; which I've no right to do as a chapel member."

"Can't ye fix your mind upon what was said by the London preacher to-day, and try to get rid of your wandering fancies that way?"

"I do. But my wicked heart will ramble off in spite of myself."

"Well—I know what it is to have a wanton mind o' my own, too! If you on'y knew what I do dream sometimes o' nights quite against my wishes, you'd say I had my struggles!" (Anny, too, had grown rather serious of late, her lover having jilted her.)

"What shall I do about it?" urged Arabella, morbidly.

"You could take a lock of your late-lost husband's hair, and have it made into a mourning brooch, and look at it every hour of the day."

"I haven't a morsel!—and if I had 'twould be no good. . . . After all that's said about the comforts of this religion, I wish I had Jude back again!"

"You must fight valiant against the feeling, since he's another's. And I've heard that another good thing for it, when it afflicts volupshious widows, is to go to your husband's grave in the dusk of evening, and stand a long while a-bowed down."

"Pooh! I know as well as you what I must do; only I don't do it!"

They drove in silence along the straight road till they were within the horizon of Marygreen, which lay not far to the left of their route. They came to the junction of the highway and the cross-lane leading to that village, whose church-tower could be seen athwart the hollow. When they got yet farther on, and were passing the lonely house in which Arabella and Jude had lived during the first months of their marriage, and where the pig-killing had taken place, she could control herself no longer.

"He's more mine than hers!" she burst out. "What right has she to him, I should like to know! I'd take him from her if I could!"

"Fie, Abby! And your husband only a month gone! Pray against it!"

"Be damned if I do! Feelings are feelings! I won't be a creeping hypocrite any longer—so there!"

Arabella had hastily drawn from her pocket a bundle of tracts which she had brought with her to distribute at the fair, and of which she had given away several. As she spoke she flung the whole remainder of the packet into the hedge. "I've tried that sort o' physic and have failed wi' it. I must be as I was born!"

"Hush! You be excited, dear! Now you come along home quiet, and have a cup of tea, and don't let us talk about un no more. We won't come out this road again, as it leads to where he is, because it inflames 'ee so. You'll be all right again soon."

Arabella did calm herself down by degrees; and they crossed the Ridge-way. When they began to descend the long, straight hill, they saw plodding along in front of them an elderly man of spare stature and thoughtful gait. In his hand he carried a basket; and there was a touch of slovenliness in his attire, together with that indefinable something in his whole appearance which suggested one who was his own housekeeper, purveyor, confidant, and friend, through possessing nobody else at all in the world to act in those capacities for him. The remainder of the journey was down hill, and guessing him to be going to Alfredston, they offered him a lift, which he accepted.

Arabella looked at him, and looked again, till at length she spoke. "If I don't mistake I am talking to Mr. Phillotson?"

The wayfarer faced round and regarded her in turn. "Yes; my name is Phillotson," he said. "But I don't recognize you, ma'am."

"I remember you well enough when you used to be school-master out at Marygreen, and I one of your scholars. I used to walk up there from Cresscombe every day,

because we had only a mistress down at our place, and you taught better. But you wouldn't remember me as I should you?—Arabella Donn."

He shook his head. "No," he said, politely, "I don't recall the name. And I should hardly recognize in your present portly self the slim school child no doubt you were then."

"Well, I always had plenty of flesh on my bones. However, I am staying down here with some friends at present. You know, I suppose, who I married?"

"No."

"Jude Fawley — also a scholar of yours — at least a night-scholar—for some little time, I think? And known to you afterwards, if I am not mistaken."

"Dear me, dear me," said Phillotson, starting out of his stiffness. "*You* Fawley's wife? To be sure—he had a wife! And he—I understood—"

"Divorced her—as you did yours—perhaps for better reasons."

"Indeed?"

"Well—he med have been right in doing it—right for both; for I soon married again, and all went pretty straight till my husband died lately. But you—you were decidedly wrong."

"No," said Phillotson, with sudden testiness. "I would rather not talk of this, but—I am convinced I did only what was right, and just, and moral. I have suffered for my act and opinions, but I hold to them; though her loss was a loss to me in more ways than one!"

"You lost your school and good income through her, did you not?"

"I don't care to talk of it. I have recently come back here—to Marygreen, I mean."

"You are keeping the school there again, just as formerly?"

The pressure of a sadness that would out unsealed him.

"I am there,' he replied. "Just as formerly, no. Merely on sufferance. It was a last resource—a small thing to return to after my move upwards, and my long indulged hopes—a returning to zero, with all its humiliations. But it is a refuge. I like the seclusion of the place; and the vicar, having known me before my so-called eccentric conduct towards my wife had ruined my reputation as a school-master, accepted my services when all other schools were closed against me. However, although I take fifty pounds a year here after taking above two hundred elsewhere, I prefer it to running the risk of having my old domestic experiences raked up against me, as I should do if I tried to make a move."

"Right you are. A contented mind is a continual feast. She has done no better."

"She is not doing well, you mean?"

"I met her by accident at Kennetbridge this very day, and she is anything but thriving. Her husband is ill, and she anxious. You made a fool of a mistake about her, I tell 'ee again, and the harm you did yourself by dirting your own nest serves you right, excusing the liberty."

"How?"

"She was innocent."

"But nonsense! They did not even defend the case!"

"That was because they didn't care to. She was quite innocent of what obtained you your freedom, at the time you obtained it. I saw her just afterwards, and proved it to myself completely by talking to her."

Phillotson grasped the edge of the spring-cart, and appeared to be much stressed and worried by the information. "Still—she wanted to go," he said.

"Yes. But you shouldn't have let her. That's the only way with these fanciful women that chaw high—innocent or guilty. She'd have come round in time. We all do! Custom does it! it's all the same in the end! However, I think she's fond of her man still—whatever he med be of her. You were too quick about her. *I*

shouldn't have let her go! I should have kept her chained on — her spirit for kicking would have been broke soon enough! There's nothing like bondage and a stone-deaf task-master for taming us women. Besides, you've got the laws on your side. Moses knew. Don't you call to mind what he says?"

"Not for the moment, ma'am, I regret to say."

"Call yourself a school-master! I used to think o't when they read it in church, and I was carrying on a bit. 'Then shall the man be guiltless; but the woman shall bear her iniquity.' Damn rough on us women; but we must grin and put up wi' it!—Haw haw!—Well, she's got her deserts now."

"Yes," said Phillotson, with biting sadness. "Cruelty is the law pervading all nature and society; and we can't get out of it if we would!"

"Well—don't you forget to try it next time, old man."

"I cannot answer you, madam. I have never known much of womankind."

They had now reached the low levels bordering Alfredston, and, passing through the outskirts, approached a mill, to which Phillotson said his errand led him; whereupon they drew up, and he alighted, bidding them good-night in a preoccupied mood.

In the mean time Sue, though remarkably successful in her provisional business at Kennetbridge fair, had lost the temporary brightness which had begun to sit upon her sadness on account of that success. When all her "Christminster" cakes had been disposed of she took upon her arm the empty basket, and the cloth which had covered the standing she had hired, and giving the other things to the boy left the street with him. They followed a lane to a distance of half a mile, till they met an old woman carrying a child in short clothes, and leading a toddler in the other hand.

Sue kissed the children, and said, "How is he now?"

"Still better!" returned Mrs. Edlin, cheerfully. "Before you are ill your husband will be well enough—don't 'ee trouble."

They turned, and came to some old, dun-tiled cottages with gardens and fruit-trees. Into one of these they entered by lifting the latch without knocking, and were at once in the general living-room. Here they greeted Jude, who was sitting in an arm-chair, the increased delicacy of his normally delicate features, and the childishly expectant look in his eyes, being alone sufficient to show that he had been passing through a severe illness.

"What! you have sold them all?" he said, a gleam of interest lighting up his face.

"Yes. Arcades, gables, east windows, and all." She told him the pecuniary results, and then hesitated. At last, when they were left alone, she informed him of the unexpected meeting with Arabella, and the latter's widowhood.

Jude was discomposed. "What! is she living here?" he said.

"No; at Alfredston," said Sue.

Jude's countenance remained clouded. "I thought I had better tell you," she continued, kissing him anxiously.

"Yes. . . . Dear me! Arabella not in the depths of London, but down here! It is only a little over a dozen miles across the country to Alfredston. What is she doing there?"

She told him all she knew. "She has taken to chapel-going," Sue added; "and talks accordingly."

"Well," said Jude, "perhaps it is for the best that we have almost decided to move on. I feel much better today, and shall be well enough to leave in a week or two. Then Mrs. Edlin can go home again—dear faithful old soul—the only friend we have in the world!"

"Where do you think to go to?" Sue asked, a tearfulness in her tones.

Then Jude confessed what was in his mind. He said it would surprise her, perhaps, after his having resolutely avoided all the old places for so long. But one thing and another had made him think a great deal of Christminster lately, and, if she didn't mind, he would like to go back there. Why should they care if they were known? It was over-sensitive of them to mind so much. They could go on selling cakes there, for that matter, if he couldn't work. He had no sense of shame at mere poverty; and perhaps he would be as strong as ever soon, and able to set up stone-cutting for himself there.

"Why should you care so much for Christminster?" she said, pensively. "Christminster cares nothing for you, poor dear!"

"Well, I do; I can't help it. I love the place—although I know how it hates all men like me—the so-called Self-taught—how it scorns our labored acquisitions, when it should be the first to respect them; how it sneers at our false quantities and mispronunciations, when it should say, I see you want help, my poor friend! . . . Nevertheless, it is the centre of the universe to me, because of my early dream: and nothing can alter it. Perhaps it will soon wake up, and be generous. I pray so! . . . I should like to go back to live there—perhaps to die there! In two or three weeks I might, I think. It will then be June, and I should like to be there by a particular day."

His hope that he was recovering proved so far well grounded that in three weeks they had arrived in the city of many memories; were actually treading its pavements, receiving the reflection of the sunshine from its wasting walls.

PART VI

AT CHRISTMINSTER AGAIN

"*. . . And she humbled her body greatly, and all the places of her joy she filled with her torn hair.*"—ESTHER (Apoc.).

"*There are two who decline, a woman and I,*
And enjoy our death in the darkness here."
—R. BROWNING.

I

On their arrival the station was lively with straw-hatted young men, welcoming young girls who bore a remarkable family likeness to their welcomers, and who were dressed up in the brightest and lightest of raiment.

"The place seems gay," said Sue. "Why—it is Remembrance Day!—Jude—how sly of you—you came to-day on purpose!"

"Yes," said Jude, quietly, as he took charge of the small child, and told Arabella's boy to keep close to them, Sue attending to their own eldest. "I thought we might as well come to-day as on any other."

"But I am afraid it will depress you!" she said, looking anxiously at him, up and down.

"Oh, I mustn't let it interfere with our business; and we have a good deal to do before we shall be settled here. The first thing is lodgings."

Having left their luggage and his tools at the station, they proceeded on foot up the familiar street, the holiday people all drifting in the same direction. Reaching the Fourways, they were about to turn off to where accommodation was likely to be found when, looking at the clock and the hurrying crowd, Jude said: "Let us go and see the procession, and never mind the lodgings just now. We can get them afterwards."

"Oughtn't we to get a house over our heads first?" she asked.

But his soul seemed full of the anniversary, and together they went down Chief Street, their smallest child in Jude's arms, Sue leading her little girl, and Arabel-

la's boy walking thoughtfully and silently beside them. Crowds of pretty sisters in airy costumes, and meekly ignorant parents, who had known no college in their youth, were under convoy in the same direction by brothers and sons bearing the opinion written large on them that no properly qualified human beings had lived on earth till they came to grace it here and now.

"My failure is reflected on me by every one of those young fellows," said Jude. "A lesson on presumption is awaiting me to-day!—Humiliation Day for me! . . . If you, my dear darling, hadn't come to my rescue, I should have gone to the dogs with despair!"

She saw from his face that he was getting into one of his tempestuous, self-harrowing moods. "It would have been better if we had gone at once about our own affairs, dear," she answered. "I am sure this sight will awaken old sorrows in you, and do no good!"

"Well—we are near; we will see it now," said he.

They turned in on the left by the church with the Italian porch, whose helical columns were heavily draped with creepers, and pursued the lane till there arose on Jude's sight the circular theatre with that well-known lantern above it, which stood in his mind as the sad symbol of his abandoned hopes; for it was from that outlook that he had finally surveyed the City of Colleges on the afternoon of his great meditation, which convinced him at last of the futility of his attempt to be a son of the University.

To-day, in the open space stretching between this building and the nearest college, stood a crowd of expectant people. A passage was kept clear through their midst by two barriers of timber, extending from the door of the college to the door of the large building between it and the theatre.

"Here is the place—they are just going to pass!" cried Jude, in sudden excitement. And, pushing his way to the front, he took up a position close to the barrier, still hug-

ging the youngest child in his arms, while Sue and the others kept immediately behind him. The crowd filled in at their back, and fell to talking, joking, and laughing as carriage after carriage drew up at the lower door of the college, and solemn stately figures in blood-red robes began to alight. The sky had grown overcast and livid, and thunder rumbled now and then.

Father Time shuddered. "It do seem like the Judgment Day!" he whispered.

"They are only learned Doctors," said Sue.

While they waited big drops of rain fell on their heads and shoulders, and the delay grew tedious. Sue again wished not to stay.

"They won't be long now," said Jude, without turning his head.

But the procession did not come forth, and somebody in the crowd, to pass the time, looked at the façade of the nearest college, and said he wondered what was meant by the Latin inscription in its midst. Jude, who stood near the inquirer, explained it; and finding that the people all round him were listening with interest, went on to describe the carving of the frieze (which he had studied years before), and to criticise some details of masonry in other college fronts about the city.

The idle crowd, including the two policemen at the doors, stared like the Lycaonians at Paul, for Jude was apt to get too enthusiastic over any subject in hand, and they seemed to wonder how the stranger should know more about the buildings of their town than they themselves did; till one of them said: "Why, I know that man; he used to work here years ago—Jude Fawley, that's his name! Don't you mind he used to be nicknamed Tutor of St. Slums, d' ye mind?—because he aimed at that line o' business? He's married, I suppose, then, and that's his child he's carrying. Taylor would know him, as he knows everybody."

The speaker was a man named Jack Stagg, with whom

Jude had formerly worked in repairing the college masonries; Tinker Taylor was seen to be standing near. Having his attention called, the latter cried across the barriers to Jude: "You've honored us by coming back again, my friend!"

Jude nodded.

"An' you don't seem to have done any great things for yourself by going away?"

Jude assented to this also.

"Except found more mouths to fill!" This came in a new voice, and Jude recognized its owner to be Uncle Joe, another mason whom he had known.

Jude replied good-humoredly that he could not dispute it; and from remark to remark something like a general conversation arose between him and the crowd of idlers, during which Tinker Taylor asked Jude if he remembered the Apostles' Creed in Latin still, and the night of the challenge in the public-house.

"But Fortune didn't lie that way?" threw in Joe. "Yer powers wasn't enough to carry 'ee through?"

"Don't answer them any more!" entreated Sue.

"I don't think I like Christminster!" murmured little Time, mournfully, as he stood submerged and invisible in the crowd.

But finding himself the centre of curiosity, quizzing, and comment, Jude was not inclined to shrink from open declarations of what he had no great reason to be ashamed of; and in a little while was stimulated to say in a loud voice, to the listening throng generally:

"It is a difficult question, my friends, for any young man—that question I had to grapple with, and which thousands are weighing at the present moment in these uprising times—whether to follow uncritically the track he finds himself in, without considering his aptness for it, or to consider what his aptness or bent may be, and reshape his course accordingly. I tried to do the latter, and I failed. But I don't admit that my failure proved

my view to be a wrong one, or that my success would have made it a right one; though that's how we appraise such attempts nowadays—I mean, not by their essential soundness, but by their accidental outcomes. If I had ended by becoming like one of these gentlemen in red and black that we saw dropping in here by now, everybody would have said: 'See how wise that young man was, to follow the bent of his nature!' But having ended no better than I began, they say: 'See what a fool that fellow was in following a freak of his fancy!'

"However, it was my poverty and not my will that consented to be beaten. It takes two or three generations to do what I tried to do in one; and my impulses—affections—vices perhaps they should be called—were too strong not to hamper a man without advantages, who should be as cold-blooded as a fish and as selfish as a pig to have a really good chance of being one of his country's worthies. You may ridicule me—I am quite willing that you should—I am a fit subject, no doubt. But I think if you knew what I have gone through these last few years you would rather pity me. And if they knew"—he nodded towards the college at which the Dons were severally arriving—"it is just possible they would do the same."

"He do look ill and worn-out, it is true!" said a woman.

Sue's face grew more emotional; but though she stood close to Jude she was screened.

"I may do some good before I am dead—be a sort of success as a frightful example of what not to do, and so illustrate a moral story," continued Jude, beginning to grow bitter, though he had opened serenely enough. "I was, perhaps, after all, a paltry victim to the spirit of mental and social restlessness that makes so many unhappy in these days."

"Don't tell them that!" whispered Sue, with tears, at perceiving Jude's state of mind. "You weren't that.

You struggled nobly to acquire knowledge, and only the meanest souls in the world would blame you."

Jude shifted the child into a more easy position on his arm, and concluded: "And what I appear, a sick and poor man, is not the worst of me. I am in a chaos of principles—groping in the dark—acting by instinct and not after example. Eight or nine years ago, when I came here first, I had a neat stock of fixed opinions, but they dropped away one by one; and the further I get the less sure I am. I doubt if I have anything more for my present rule of life than following inclinations which do me and nobody else any harm, and actually give pleasure to those I love best. There, gentlemen, since you wanted to know how I was getting on, I have told you. Much good may it do you! I cannot explain further here. I perceive there is something wrong somewhere in our social formulas: what it is can only be discovered by men or women with greater insight than mine—if, indeed, they ever discover it—at least, in our time. 'For who knoweth what is good for man in this life?—and who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?'"

"Hear, hear!" said the populace.

"Well preached!" said Tinker Taylor. And privately to his neighbors: "Why, one of them jobbing pa'sons swarming about here, that takes the services when our head Reverends want a holiday, wouldn't ha' discoursed such doctrine for less than a guinea down. Hey? I'll take my oath not one o' 'em would! And then he must have had it wrote down for 'n. And this only a working-man!"

As a sort of objective commentary on Jude's remarks there drove up at this moment with a belated Doctor, robed and panting, a cab whose horse failed to stop at the exact point required for setting down the hirer, who jumped out and entered the door. The driver, alighting, began to kick the animal in the belly.

"If that can be done," said Jude, "at college gates in

the most religious and educational city in the world, what shall we say as to how far we've got?"

"Order!" said one of the policemen, who had been engaged with a comrade in opening the large doors opposite the college. "Keep yer tongue quiet, my man, while the procession passes." The rain came on more heavily, and all who had umbrellas opened them. Jude was not one of these, and Sue only possessed a small one, half sunshade. She had grown pale, though Jude did not notice it then.

"Let us go on, dear," she whispered, endeavoring to shelter him. "We haven't any lodgings yet, remember, and all our things are at the station; and you are by no means well yet. I am afraid this wet will hurt you."

"They are coming now. Just a moment, and I'll go," said he.

A peal of six bells struck out, human faces began to crowd the windows around, and the procession of Heads of Houses and new Doctors emerged, their red-and-black gowned forms passing across the field of Jude's vision like inaccessible planets across an object-glass.

As they went their names were called by knowing informants, and when they reached the old round theatre of Wren a cheer rose high.

"Let's go that way!" cried Jude; and though it now rained steadily he seemed not to know it, and took them round to the Theatre. Here they stood upon the straw that was laid to drown the discordant noise of wheels, where the quaint and frost-eaten stone busts encircling the building looked with pallid grimness on the proceedings, and in particular at the bedraggled Jude, Sue, and their children, as at ludicrous persons who had no business there.

"I wish I could get in," he said to her, fervidly. "Listen—I may catch a few words of the Latin speech by staying here; the windows are open."

However, beyond the peals of the organ and the shouts

and hurrahs between each piece of oratory, Jude's standing in the wet did not bring much Latin to his intelligence more than, now and then, a sonorous word in *um* or *ibus*.

"Well, I'm an outsider to the end of my days," he sighed, after a while. "Now I'll go, my patient Sue. How good of you to wait in the rain all this time—to gratify my infatuation! I'll never care any more about the infernal cursed place; upon my soul I won't! But what made you tremble so when we were at the barrier? And how pale you are, Sue!"

"I saw Richard among the people on the other side."

"Ah—did you?"

"He is evidently come up to Jerusalem to see the festival like the rest of us, and on that account is probably living not so very far away. He had the same hankering for the University that you had, in a milder form. I don't think he saw me, though he must have heard you speaking to the crowd. But he seemed not to notice."

"Well, suppose he did. Your mind is free from worries about him now, my Sue?"

"Yes, I suppose so. But I am weak. Although I know it is all right with our plans, I felt a curious dread of him; an awe, or terror, of conventions I don't believe in. It comes over me at times like a sort of creeping paralysis, and makes me so sad!"

"You are getting tired, Sue. Oh—I forgot, darling! Yes, we'll go on at once."

They started in quest of the lodging, and at last found something that seemed to promise well, in Mildew Lane—a spot which to Jude was irresistible—though to Sue it was not so fascinating—a narrow lane close to the back of a college, but having no communication with it. The little houses were darkened to gloom by the high collegiate buildings, within which life was so far removed from that of the people in the lane as if it had been on opposite sides of the globe; yet only a thickness of wall di-

vided them. Two or three of the houses had notices of rooms to let, and the new-comers knocked at the door of one, which a woman opened.

"Ah—listen!" said Jude, suddenly, instead of addressing her.

"What?"

"Why, the bells. What church can that be? The tones are familiar."

Another peal of bells had begun to sound out at some distance off.

"I don't know!" said the landlady, tartly. "Did you knock to ask that?"

"No; for lodgings," said Jude, coming to himself.

The householder scrutinized Sue a moment. "We haven't any to let," said she, shutting the door.

Jude looked discomfited, and the boy distressed. "Now, Jude," said Sue, "let me try. You don't know the way."

They found a second place hard by; but here the occupier, observing not only Sue, but the boy and the small children, said, civilly, "I am sorry to say we don't let where there are children," and also closed the door.

The small child squared his mouth and cried silently, with an instinct that trouble loomed. The boy sighed. "I don't like Christminster!" he said. "Are the great, old houses jails?"

"No; colleges," said Jude; "which perhaps you'll study in some day."

"I'd rather not!" the boy rejoined.

"Now we'll try again," said Sue. "I'll pull my cloak more round me. . . . Leaving Kennetbridge for this place is like coming from Caiaphas to Pilate! . . . How do I look now, dear?"

"Nobody would notice it now," said Jude.

There was one other house, and they tried a third time. The woman here was more amiable; but she had little room to spare, and could only agree to take in Sue and

the children, if her husband could go elsewhere. This arrangement they perforce adopted, in the stress from delaying their search till so late. They came to terms with her, though her price was rather high for their pockets. But they could not afford to be critical, till Jude had time to get a more permanent abode; and in this house Sue took possession of a back room on the second floor, with an inner closet-room for the children. Jude stayed and had a cup of tea, and was pleased to find that the window commanded the back of one of the colleges. Kissing all four, he went to get a few necessaries and look for lodgings for himself.

When he was gone the landlady came up to talk a little with Sue, and gather something of the circumstances of the family she had taken in. Sue had not the art of prevarication, and, after admitting several facts as to their late difficulties and wanderings, she was startled by the landlady saying, suddenly:

"Are you really a married woman?"

Sue hesitated; and then impulsively told the woman that her husband and herself had each been unhappy in their first marriages, after which, terrified at the thought of a second irrevocable union, and lest the condition of the contract should kill their love, yet wishing to be together, they had literally not found the courage to repeat it, though they had attempted it two or three times. Therefore, though in her own sense of the words she was a married woman, in the landlady's sense she was not.

The housewife looked embarrassed, and went downstairs. Sue sat by the window in a reverie, watching the rain. Her quiet was broken by the noise of some one entering the house, and then the voices of a man and woman in conversation in the passage below. The landlady's husband had arrived, and she was explaining to him the incoming of the lodgers during his absence.

His voice rose in sudden anger. "Now who wants such

a woman here? and perhaps a confinement! . . . Besides, didn't I say I wouldn't have children? The hall and stairs fresh painted, to be kicked about by them! You must have known all was not straight with 'em—coming like that. Taking in a family when I said a single man."

The wife expostulated, but, as it seemed, the husband insisted on his point; for presently a tap came to Sue's door, and the woman appeared.

"I am sorry to tell you, ma'am," she said, "that I can't let you have the room for the week, after all. My husband objects; and therefore I must ask you to go. I don't mind your staying over to-night, as it is getting late in the afternoon; but I shall be glad if you can leave early in the morning."

Though she knew that she was entitled to the lodging for a week, Sue did not wish to create a disturbance between the wife and husband, and she said she would leave as requested. When the landlady had gone Sue looked out of the window again. Finding that the rain had ceased she proposed to the boy that, after putting the little ones to bed, they should go out and search about for another place, and bespeak it for the morrow, so as not to be so hard driven then as they had been that day.

Therefore, instead of unpacking her boxes, which had just been sent on from the station by Jude, they sallied out into the damp, though not unpleasant, streets, Sue resolving not to disturb her husband with the news of her notice to quit while he was perhaps worried in obtaining a lodging for himself. In the company of the boy she wandered into this street and into that; but though she tried a dozen different houses she fared far worse alone than she had fared in Jude's company, and could get nobody to promise her a room for the following day. Every householder looked askance at such a woman and child inquiring for accommodation in the gloom.

"I ought not to be born, ought I?" said the boy, with misgiving.

Thoroughly tired at last Sue returned to the place where she was not welcome, but where at least she had temporary shelter. In her absence Jude had left his address; but knowing how weak he still was she adhered to her determination not to disturb him till the next day.

II

SUE sat looking at the bare floor of the room, the house being little more than an old intramural cottage, and then she regarded the scene outside the uncurtained window. At some distance opposite, the outer walls of Sarcophagus College — silent, black, and windowless— threw their four centuries of gloom, bigotry, and decay into the little room she occupied, shutting out the moonlight by night and the sun by day. The outlines of Rubric College also were discernible beyond the other, and the tower of a third farther off still. She thought of the strange operation of a simple-minded man's ruling passion, that it should have led Jude, who loved her and the children so tenderly, to place them here in this depressing purlieu, because he was still haunted by his dream. Even now he did not distinctly hear the freezing negative that those scholared walls had echoed to his desire.

The failure to find another lodging, and the lack of room in this house for his father, had made a deep impression on the boy—a brooding, undemonstrative horror seemed to have seized him. The silence was broken by his saying, "Mother, *what* shall we do to-morrow?"

"I don't know," said Sue, despondently. "I am afraid this will trouble your father."

"I wish father was quite well, and there had been room for him! Then it wouldn't matter so much! Poor father!"

"It wouldn't!"

"Can I do anything?"

"No! All is trouble, adversity, and suffering!"

"Father went away to give us children room, didn't he?"

"Partly."

"It would be better to be out o' the world than in it, wouldn't it?"

"It would almost, dear."

"'Tis because of us children, too, isn't it, that you can't get a good lodging?"

"Well, people do object to children sometimes."

"Then if children make so much trouble, why do people have 'em?"

"Oh, because it is a law of nature."

"But we don't ask to be born?"

"No, indeed."

"And what makes it worse with me is that you are not my real mother, and you needn't have had me unless you liked. I oughtn't to have come to 'ee—that's the real truth! I troubled 'em in Australia, and I trouble folk here. I wish I hadn't been born!"

"You couldn't help it, my dear."

"I think that whenever children be born that are not wanted they should be killed directly, before their souls come to 'em, and not allowed to grow big and walk about!"

Sue did not reply. She was doubtfully pondering how to treat this too reflective child.

She at last concluded that, so far as circumstances permitted, she would be honest and candid with one who entered into her difficulties like an aged friend.

"There is going to be another in our family soon," she hesitatingly remarked.

"How?"

"There is going to be another baby."

"What!" The boy jumped up wildly. "O God, mother, you've never a-sent for another; and such trouble with what you've got!"

"Yes, I have, I am sorry to say," murmured Sue, her eyes glistening with suspended tears.

The boy burst out weeping. "Oh, you don't care, you don't care!" he cried, in bitter reproach. "How *ever* could you, mother, be so wicked and cruel as this, when you needn't have done it till we was better off, and father well! To bring us all into *more* trouble! No room for us, and father a-forced to go away, and we turned out to-morrow; and yet you be going to have another of us soon! . . . 'Tis done o' purpose—'tis—'tis!" He walked up and down sobbing.

"Y-you must forgive me, little Jude!" she pleaded, her bosom heaving now as much as the boy's. "I can't explain; I will when you are older. It does seem—as if I had done it on purpose, now we are in these difficulties. I can't explain, dear. But it—it is not quite on purpose; I can't help it."

"Yes it is—it must be! For nobody would interfere with us, like that, unless you agreed! I won't forgive you, ever, ever! I'll never believe you care for me, or father, or any of us any more!"

He got up, and went away into the closet adjoining her room, in which a bed had been spread on the floor. There she heard him say, "If we children was gone there'd be no trouble at all!"

"Don't think that, dear," she cried, rather peremptorily, "but go to sleep!"

The following morning she awoke at a little past six, and decided to get up and run across before breakfast to the inn which Jude had informed her to be his quarters, to tell him what had happened before he went out. She arose softly, to avoid disturbing the children, who, as she knew, must be fatigued by their exertions of yesterday

She found Jude at breakfast in the obscure tavern he had chosen as a counterpoise to the expense of her lodging, and she explained to him her homelessness. He had been so anxious about her all night, he said. Somehow,

now it was morning, the request to leave the lodgings did not seem such a depressing incident as it had seemed the night before, nor did even her failure to find another place affect her so deeply as at first. Jude agreed with her that it would not be worth while to insist upon her right to stay a week, but to take immediate steps for removal.

"You must all come to this inn for a day or two," he said. "It is a rough place, and it will not be so nice for the children, but we shall have more time to look round. There are plenty of lodgings in the suburbs—in my old quarter of Beersheba. Have breakfast with me now you are here, my bird. You are sure you are well? There will be plenty of time to get back and prepare the children's meal before they wake. In fact, I'll go with you."

She joined Jude in a hasty meal, and in a quarter of an hour they started together, resolving to clear out from Sue's too respectable lodging immediately. On reaching the place and going up-stairs she found that all was quiet in the children's room, and called to the landlady in timorous tones to please bring up the teakettle and something for their breakfast. This was perfunctorily done, and, producing a couple of eggs which she had brought with her, she put them into the boiling kettle, and summoned Jude to watch them for the youngsters while she went to call them, it being now about half-past eight o'clock.

Jude stood bending over the kettle, with his watch in his hand, timing the eggs, so that his back was turned to the little inner chamber where the children lay. A shriek from Sue suddenly caused him to start round. He saw that the door of the room, or rather closet—which had seemed to go heavily upon its hinges as she pushed it back—was open, and that Sue had sunk to the floor just within it. Hastening forward to pick her up, he turned his eyes to the little bed spread on the boards; no children were there. He looked in bewilderment round the room. At the back of the door were fixed two hooks for hanging

garments, and from these the forms of the two youngest children were suspended by a piece of box-cord round each of their necks, while from a nail a few yards off the body of little Jude was hanging in a similar manner. An overturned chair was near the elder boy, and his glazed eyes were staring into the room; but those of the girl and the baby boy were closed.

Half paralyzed by the grotesque and hideous horror of the scene, he let Sue lie, cut the cords with his pocket-knife, and threw the three children on the bed; but the feel of their bodies in the momentary handling seemed to say that they were dead. He caught up Sue, who was in fainting-fits, and put her on the bed in the other room, after which he breathlessly summoned the landlady and ran out for a doctor.

When he got back Sue had come to herself, and the two helpless women, bending over the children in wild efforts to restore them, and the triplet of little corpses, formed a scene which overthrew his self-command. The nearest surgeon came in, but, as Jude had inferred, his presence was superfluous. The children were past saving; for though their bodies were still barely cold, it was conjectured that they had been hanging more than an hour. The probability held by the parents later on, when they were able to reason on the case, was that the elder boy, on waking, looked into the outer room for Sue, and, finding her absent, was thrown into a fit of aggravated despondency that the events and information of the evening before had induced in his morbid temperament. Moreover, a piece of paper was found upon the floor, on which was written in the boy's hand, with the bit of lead-pencil that he carried:

"Done because we are too menny."

At sight of this Sue's nerves utterly gave way, an awful conviction that her discourse with the boy had been the

main cause of the tragedy, throwing her into a convulsive agony which knew no abatement. They carried her away against her wish to a room on the lower floor, and there she lay, her slight figure shaken with her gasps, and her eyes staring at the ceiling, the woman of the house vainly trying to soothe her.

They could hear from this chamber the people moving about above, and she implored to be allowed to go back, and was only kept from doing so by the assurance that, if there were any hope, her presence might do harm, and the reminder that it was necessary to take care of herself lest she should endanger a coming life. Her inquiries were incessant, and at last Jude came down and told her there was no hope. As soon as she could speak she informed him what she had said to the boy, and how she thought herself the cause of this.

"No," said Jude. "It was in his nature to do it. The doctor says there are such boys springing up amongst us —boys of a sort unknown in the last generation—the outcome of new views of life. They seem to see all its terrors before they are old enough to have staying power to resist them. He says it is the beginning of the coming universal wish not to live. He's an advanced man, the doctor; but he can give no consolation to—"

Jude had kept back his own grief on account of her, but he now broke down; and this stimulated Sue to efforts of sympathy which in some degree distracted her from her poignant self-reproach. When everybody was gone, she was allowed to see the children.

The boy's face expressed the whole tale of their situation. On that little shape had converged all the inauspiciousness and shadow which had darkened the first union of Jude, and all the accidents, mistakes, fears, errors of the last. He was their nodal point, their focus, their expression in a single term. For the rashness of those parents he had groaned, for their ill-assortment he had quaked, and for the misfortunes of these he had died.

When the house was silent, and they could do nothing but await the coroner's inquest, a subdued, large, low voice spread into the air of the room from behind the heavy walls at the back.

"What is it?" said Sue, her spasmodic breathing suspended.

"The organ of the College chapel. The organist practising, I suppose. It's the anthem from the Seventy-third Psalm: 'Truly God is loving unto Israel.'"

She sobbed again. "Oh, my babies! They had done no harm! Why should they have been taken away, and not I!"

There was another stillness — broken at last by two persons in conversation somewhere without.

"They are talking about us, no doubt!" moaned Sue. "'We are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men!'"

Jude listened. "No; they are not talking of us," he said. "They are two clergymen of different views, arguing about the eastward position."

Then another silence, till she was seized with another uncontrollable fit of grief. "There is something external to us which says, 'You sha'n't!' First it said, 'You sha'n't learn!' Then it said, 'You sha'n't labor!' Now it says, 'You sha'n't love!'"

He tried to soothe her by saying, "That's bitter of you, darling."

"But it's true!"

Thus they waited, and she went back again to her room. The baby's frock, shoes, and socks, which had been lying on a chair at the time of his death, she would not now have removed, though Jude would fain have got them out of her sight. But whenever he touched them she implored him to let them lie, and burst out almost savagely at the woman of the house when she also attempted to put them away.

Jude dreaded her dull, apathetic silences almost more

than her paroxysms. "Why don't you speak to me, Jude?" she said, after one of these. "Don't turn away from me! I can't bear the loneliness of being out of your looks!"

"There, dear; here I am," he said, putting his face close to hers.

"Yes. . . . Oh, my comrade, our perfect union—our two-in-oneness—is now stained with blood!"

"Shadowed by death—that's all."

"Ah; but it was I who incited him, really, though I didn't know I was doing it. I talked to the child as one should only talk to people of mature age. I said the world was against us, that it was better to be out of life than in it at this price, and he took it literally. And I told him I was going to have another child. It upset him. Oh, how bitterly he upbraided me!"

"Why did you do it, Sue?"

"I can't tell. It was that I wanted to be truthful. I couldn't bear deceiving him as to the facts of life. And yet I wasn't truthful, for with a false delicacy I told him too obscurely. Why was I half wiser than my fellow-women, and not entirely wiser? Why didn't I tell him pleasant untruths, instead of half realities? It was my want of self-control, so that I could neither conceal things nor reveal them."

"Your plan might have been a good one for the majority of cases, only in our peculiar case it chanced to work badly perhaps. He must have known sooner or later."

"And I was just making my baby darling a new frock, and now I shall never see him in it, and never talk to him any more! . . . My eyes are so swollen that I can scarcely see; and yet little more than a year ago I called myself happy! We went about loving each other too much—indulging ourselves to utter selfishness with each other! We said—do you remember?—that we would make a virtue of joy. I said it was Nature's intention,

Nature's law and *raison d'être*, that we should be joyful in what instincts she afforded us — instincts which civilization had taken upon itself to thwart. What dreadful things I said! And now Fate has given us this stab in the back for being such fools as to take Nature at her word!"

She sank into a quiet contemplation, till she said, "It is best, perhaps, that they should be gone. Yes—I see it is! Better that they should be plucked fresh, than stay to wither away miserably!"

"Yes," replied Jude. "Some say that the elders should rejoice when their children die in infancy."

"But they don't know! . . . Oh, my babies, my babies, could you be alive now! You may say the boy wished to be out of life, or he wouldn't have done it. It was not unreasonable for him to die: it was part of his incurably sad nature, poor little fellow! But then the others—my *own* children and yours!"

Again Sue looked at the hanging little frock, and at the socks and shoes; and her figure quivered like a string. "I am a pitiable creature," she said, "good neither for earth nor heaven any more! I am driven out of my mind by things! What ought to be done?" She stared at Jude, and tightly held his hand.

"Nothing can be done," he replied. "Things are as they are, and will be brought to their destined issue."

She paused. "Yes! Who said that?" she asked, heavily.

"It comes in the chorus of the *Agamemnon*. It has been in my mind continually since this happened."

"My poor Jude—how you've missed everything!—you more than I, for I did get you! To think you should know that by your unassisted reading, and yet be in poverty and despair!"

After such momentary diversions her grief would return in a wave.

The jury duly came and viewed the bodies, the inquest

was held; and next arrived the melancholy morning of the funeral. Accounts in the newspapers had brought to the spot curious idlers, who stood apparently counting the window-panes and the stones of the walls. Doubt of the real relations of the couple added zest to their curiosity. Sue had declared that she would follow the two little ones to the grave, but at the last moment she gave way, and the coffins were quietly carried out of the house while she was lying down. Jude got into the vehicle, and it drove away, much to the relief of the landlord, who now had only Sue and her luggage remaining on his hands, which he hoped to be also clear of later on in the day, and so to have freed his house from the exasperating notoriety it had acquired during the week through his wife's unlucky admission of these strangers. In the afternoon he privately consulted with the owner of the house, and they agreed that if any objection to it arose from the tragedy which had occurred there they would try to get its number changed.

When Jude had seen the two little boxes — one containing little Jude, and the other the two smallest—deposited in the earth, he hastened back to Sue, who was still in her room, and he therefore did not disturb her just then. Feeling anxious, however, he went again about four o'clock. The woman thought she was still lying down, but returned to him to say that she was not in her bedroom, after all. Her hat and jacket, too, were missing; she had gone out. Jude hurried off to the public-house where he was sleeping. She had not been there. Then, bethinking himself of possibilities, he went along the road to the cemetery, which he entered, and crossed to where the interments had recently taken place. The idlers who had followed to the spot by reason of the tragedy were all gone now. A man with a shovel in his hands was attempting to earth in the common grave of the three children, but his arm was held back by an expostulating woman, who stood in the half-filled hole. It

was Sue, whose colored clothing, which she had never thought of changing for the mourning he had bought, suggested to the eye a deeper grief than the conventional garb of bereavement could express.

"He's filling them in, and he sha'n't till I've seen my little ones again!" she cried, wildly, when she saw Jude. "I want to see them once more. Oh, Jude—please, Jude—I want to see them! I didn't know you would let them be taken away while I was asleep! You said perhaps I should see them once more before they were screwed down; and then you didn't, but took them away! Oh, Jude, you are cruel to me, too!"

"She's been wanting me to dig out the grave again, and let her get to the coffins," said the man with the spade. "She ought to be took home, by the look o' her. She is hardly responsible, poor thing, seemingly. Can't dig 'em up again now, ma'am. Do ye go home with your husband, and take it quiet, and thank God that there'll be another soon to swage yer grief."

But Sue kept asking: "Can't I see them once more—just once! Can't I? Only just one little minute, Jude! It would not take long! And I should be so glad, Jude! I will be so good, and not disobey you ever any more, Jude, if you will let me? I would go home quietly afterwards, and not want to see them any more! Can't I? Why can't I?"

Thus she went on. Jude was thrown into such acute sorrow that he almost felt he would try to get the man to accede. But it could do no good, and might make her still worse; and he saw that it was imperative to get her home at once. So he coaxed her, and whispered tenderly, and put his arm round her to support her; till she helplessly gave in, and was induced to leave the cemetery.

He wished to obtain a fly to take her back in, but economy being so imperative she deprecated his doing so, and they walked along slowly, Jude in black crape, she in brown-and-red clothing. They were to have gone

to a new lodging that afternoon, but Jude saw that it was not practicable, and in course of time they entered the now hated house. Sue was at once got to bed, and the doctor sent for.

Jude waited all the evening down-stairs. At a very late hour the intelligence was brought to him that a child had been prematurely born, and that it, like the others, was a corpse.

III

SUE was convalescent, though she had hoped for death, and Jude had again obtained work at his old trade. They were in other lodgings now, in the direction of Beersheba, and not far from the ceremonial Church of Saint Silas.

They would sit silent, more bodeful of the direct antagonism of things than of their insensate and stolid obstructiveness. Vague and quaint imaginings had haunted Sue, in the days when her intellect scintillated like a star, that the world resembled a stanza or melody composed in a dream; it was wonderfully excellent to the half-aroused intelligence, but hopelessly absurd at the full waking; that the First Cause worked automatically like a somnambulist, and not reflectively like a sage; that at the framing of the terrestrial conditions there seemed never to have been contemplated such a development of emotional perceptiveness among the creatures subject to those conditions as that reached by thinking and educated humanity. But affliction makes opposing forces loom anthropomorphous; and those ideas were now exchanged for a sense of Jude and herself fleeing from a persecutor.

"We must conform!" she said, mournfully. "All the ancient wrath of the Power above us has been vented upon us, His poor creatures, and we must submit. There is no choice. We must. It is no use fighting against God!"

"It is only against man and senseless circumstance," said Jude.

"True!" she murmured. "What have I been thinking

of! I am getting as superstitious as a savage! . . . But whoever or whatever our foe may be, I am cowed into submission. I have no more fighting strength left; no more enterprise. I am beaten, beaten! . . . 'We are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men!' I am always saying that now."

"I feel the same!"

"What shall we do? You are in work now; but remember, it may only be because our history and relations are not absolutely known. . . . Possibly, if they knew our marriage had not been formalized they would turn you out of your job as they did at Aldbrickham!"

"I hardly know. Perhaps they would hardly do that. However, I think that we ought to make it legal now—as soon as you are able to go out.

"You think we ought?"

"Certainly."

And Jude fell into thought. "I have seemed to myself lately," he said, "to belong to that vast band of men shunned by the virtuous—the men called seducers. It amazes me when I think of it! I have not been conscious of it, or of any wrong-doing towards you, whom I love more than myself. Yet I *am* one of those men! I wonder if any other of them are the same purblind, simple creatures as I? . . . Yes, Sue—that's what I am. I seduced you. . . . You were a distinct type—a refined creature, intended by Nature to be left intact. But I couldn't leave you alone!"

"No, no, Jude!" she said, quickly. "Don't reproach yourself with being what you are not. If anybody is to blame it is I."

"I supported you in your resolve to leave Phillotson; and without me perhaps you wouldn't have urged him to let you go."

"I should have, just the same. As to ourselves, the fact of our not having entered into a legal contract is the saving feature in our union. We have thereby avoid-

ed insulting, as it were, the solemnity of our first marriages."

"Solemnity?" Jude looked at her with some surprise, and grew conscious that she was not the Sue of their earlier time.

"Yes," she said, with a little quiver in her words, "I have had dreadful fears, a dreadful sense of my own insolence of action. I have thought—that I am still his wife!"

"Whose?"

"Richard's."

"Good God, dearest!—why?"

"Oh I can't explain! Only the thought comes to me."

"It is your weakness—a sick fancy, without reason or meaning! Don't let it trouble you."

Sue sighed uneasily.

As a set-off against such discussions as these there had come an improvement in their pecuniary position, which earlier in their experience would have made them cheerful. Jude had quite unexpectedly found good employment at his old trade almost directly he arrived, the summer weather suiting his fragile constitution; and outwardly his days went on with that monotonous uniformity which is in itself so grateful after vicissitude. People seemed to have forgotten that he had ever shown any awkward aberrancies, and he daily mounted to the parapets and copings of colleges he could never enter, and renewed the crumbling freestones of mullioned windows he would never look from, as if he had known no wish to do otherwise.

There was this change in him—that he did not often go to any service at the churches now. One thing troubled him more than any other, that Sue and himself had mentally travelled in opposite directions since the tragedy: events which had enlarged his own views of life, laws, customs, and dogmas, had not operated in the same manner on Sue's. She was no longer the same as

in the independent days, when her intellect played like lambent lightning over conventions and formalities which he had at that time respected, though he did not now.

On a particular Sunday evening he came in rather late. She was not at home, but she soon returned, when he found her silent and meditative.

"What are you thinking of, little woman?" he asked, curiously.

"Oh, I can't tell clearly! I have thought that we have been selfish, careless, even impious, in our courses, you and I. Our life has been a vain attempt at self-delight. But self-abnegation is the higher road. We should mortify the flesh—the terrible flesh—the curse of Adam!"

"Sue," he murmured, "what has come over you?"

"We ought to be continually sacrificing ourselves on the altar of duty! But I have always striven to do what has pleased me. I well deserved the scourging I have got! I wish something would take the evil right out of me, and all my monstrous errors, and all my sinful ways!"

"Sue—my own too suffering dear!—there's no evil woman in you. Your natural instincts are perfectly healthy; not quite so impassioned, perhaps, as I could wish, but good and dear and pure. And, as I have often said, you are absolutely the most ethereal, least sensual woman I ever knew to exist without inhuman sexlessness. Why do you talk in such a changed way? We have not been selfish, except when no one could profit by our being otherwise. You used to say that human nature was noble and long-suffering, not vile and corrupt, and at last I thought you spoke truly. And now you seem to take such a much lower view!"

"I want a humble heart and a chastened mind, and I have never had them yet!"

"You have been fearless, both as a thinker and as a feeler, and you deserved more admiration than I gave. I was too full of narrow dogmas at that time to see it."

"Don't say that, Jude! I wish my every fearless word

and thought could be rooted out of my history. Self-renunciation—that's everything! I cannot humiliate myself too much. I should like to prick myself all over with pins, and bleed out the badness that's in me?"

"Hush!" he said, pressing her little face against his breast as if she were an infant. "It is bereavement that has brought you to this! Such remorse is not for you, my sensitive-plant, but for the wicked ones of the earth—who never feel it!"

"I ought not to stay like this," she murmured, when she had remained in the position a long while.

"Why not?"

"It is indulgence."

"Still on the same tack! But is there anything better on earth than that we should love one another?"

"Yes. It depends on the sort of love; and yours—ours—is the wrong."

"I won't have it, Sue! Come, when do you wish our marriage to be signed in a vestry?"

She paused, and looked up uneasily. "Never!" she whispered.

Not knowing the whole of her meaning, he took the objection serenely, and said nothing. Several minutes elapsed, and he thought she had fallen asleep; but he spoke softly, and found that she was wide awake all the time. She sat upright and sighed.

"There is a strange, indescribable perfume or atmosphere about you to-night, Sue," he said. "I mean not only mentally, but about your clothes, also—a sort of vegetable scent, which I seem to know, yet cannot remember."

"It is incense."

"Incense?"

"I have been to the service of St. Silas's, and I was in the fumes of it."

"Oh—St. Silas's."

"Yes. I go there sometimes."

"Indeed! You go there!"

"You see, Jude, it is lonely here in the week-day mornings, when you are at work, and I think and think of—of my—" She stopped till she could control the lumpiness of her throat. "And I have taken to go in there, as it is so near."

"Oh, well—of course, I say nothing against it. Only it is odd, for you. They little think what sort of chiel is amang them!"

"What do you mean, Jude?"

"Well—a sceptic, to be plain."

"How can you pain me so, dear Jude, in my trouble! Yet I know you didn't mean it. But you ought not to say that."

"I won't. But I am much surprised!"

"Well—I want to tell you something else, Jude. You won't be angry, will you? I have thought of it a good deal since my babies died. I don't think I ought to be your wife—or as your wife—any longer."

"What! . . . But you *are!*"

"From your point of view; but—"

"Of course we were afraid of the ceremony, and a good many others would have been in our places, with such strong reasons for fear. But experience has proved how we misjudged ourselves, and overrated our infirmities; and if you are beginning to respect rites and ceremonies, as you seem to be, I wonder you don't say it shall be carried out instantly? You certainly *are* my wife, Sue, in all but law. What do you mean by what you said?"

"I don't think I am!"

"Not? But suppose we *had* gone through the ceremony? Would you feel that you were then?"

"No. I should not feel even then that I was. I should feel worse than I do now."

"Why so—in the name of all that's perverse, my dear!"

"Because I am Richard's."

"Ah—you hinted that absurd fancy to me before!"

"It was only an impression with me then; I feel more and more convinced as time goes on that—I belong to him, or to nobody."

"My good heavens—how we are changing places!"

"Yes. Perhaps so."

Some few days later, in the dusk of the summer evening, they were sitting in the same small room down-stairs, when a knock came to the front door of the carpenter's house where they were lodging, and in a few moments there was a tap at the door of their room. Before they could open it the comer did so, and a woman's form appeared.

"Is Mr. Fawley here?"

Jude and Sue started as he mechanically replied in the affirmative, for the voice was Arabella's.

He formally requested her to come in, and she sat down in the window bench, where they could distinctly see her outline against the light, but no characteristic that enabled them to estimate her general aspect and air. Yet something seemed to denote that she was not quite so comfortably circumstanced, nor so bouncingly attired, as she had been during Cartlett's lifetime.

The three attempted an awkward conversation about the tragedy, of which Jude had felt it to be his duty to inform her immediately, though she had never replied to his letter.

"I have just come from the cemetery," she said. "I inquired and found the child's grave. I couldn't come to the funeral—thank you for inviting me all the same. I read all about it in the papers, and I felt I wasn't wanted. . . . No—I couldn't come to the funeral," repeated Arabella, who, seeming utterly unable to reach the ideal of a catastrophic manner, fumbled with reiterations, "but I am glad I found the grave. As 'tis your trade, Jude, you'll be able to put up a handsome stone to 'em."

"I shall put up a head-stone," said Jude, drearily.

"He was my child, and naturally I feel for him."

"I hope so. We all did."

"The others that weren't mine I didn't feel so much for, as was natural."

"Of course."

A sigh came from the dark corner where Sue sat.

"I had often wished I had mine with me," continued Mrs. Cartlett. "Perhaps 'twouldn't have happened then. But of course I didn't wish to take him away from your wife."

"I am not his wife," came from Sue.

The unexpectedness of her words struck Jude silent.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, I'm sure," said Arabella. "I thought you were!"

Jude had known from the quality of Sue's tone that her new and transcendental views lurked in her words; but all except their obvious meaning was, naturally, missed by Arabella. The latter, after evincing that she was struck by Sue's avowal, recovered herself, and went on to talk with placid bluntness about "her" boy, for whom, though in his lifetime she had shown no care at all, she now exhibited a ceremonial mournfulness that was apparently sustaining to the conscience. She alluded to the past, and in making some remark appealed again to Sue. There was no answer: Sue had invisibly left the room.

"She said she was not your wife," resumed Arabella, in another voice. "Why should she do that?"

"I cannot inform you," said Jude, shortly.

"She is, isn't she? She once told me so."

"I don't criticise what she says."

"Ah—I see! Well, my time is up. I am staying here to-night, and thought I could do no less than call, after our mutual affliction. I am sleeping at the place where I used to be barmaid, and to-morrow I go back to Alfredston. Father is come home again, and I am living with him."

"He has returned from Australia?" said Jude, with languid curiosity.

"Yes. Couldn't get on there. Had a rough time of it. Mother died of dys — what do you call it—in the hot weather, and father and two of the young ones have just got back. He has got a cottage near the old place, and for the present I am keeping house for him."

Jude's former wife had maintained a stereotyped manner of strict good-breeding even now that Sue was gone, and limited her stay to a number of minutes that should accord with the highest respectability. When she had departed, Jude, much relieved, went to the stairs and called Sue—feeling anxious as to what had become of her.

There was no answer, and the carpenter who kept the lodgings said she had not come in. Jude was puzzled, and became quite alarmed at her absence, for the hour was growing late. The carpenter called his wife, who conjectured that Sue might have gone to St. Silas's Church, as she often went there.

"Surely not at this time o' night?" said Jude. "It is shut."

"She knows somebody who keeps the key, and she has it whenever she wants it."

"How long has she been going on with this?"

"Oh, some few weeks, I think."

Jude went vaguely in the direction of the church, which he had never once approached since he lived out that way years before, when his young opinions were more mystical than they were now. The spot was deserted, but the door was certainly unfastened; he lifted the latch without noise, and, pushing the door to behind him, stood absolutely still inside. The prevalent silence seemed to contain a faint sound, explicable as a breathing, or a sobbing, which came from the other end of the building. The floor-cloth deadened his footsteps as he moved in that direction through the obscurity, which was broken only by the faintest reflected night-light from without.

High overhead, above the chancel steps, Jude could discern a huge, solidly constructed Latin cross — as large,

probably, as the original it was designed to commemorate. It seemed to be suspended in the air by invisible wires; it was set with large jewels, which faintly glimmered in some weak ray caught from outside, as the cross swayed to and fro in a silent and scarcely perceptible motion. Underneath, upon the floor, lay what appeared to be a heap of black clothes, and from this was repeated the sobbing that he had heard before. It was his Sue's form, prostrate on the paving.

"Sue!" he whispered.

Something white disclosed itself; she had turned up her face.

"What—do you want with me here, Jude?" she said. "You shouldn't come! I wanted to be alone! Why did you intrude here?"

"How can you ask!" he retorted, in quick reproach, for his full heart was wounded to its centre at this attitude of hers towards him. "Why do I come? Who has a right to come, I should like to know, if I have not? I, who love you better than my own self—better—oh, far better—than you have loved me! What made you leave me to come here alone?"

"Don't criticise me, Jude—I can't bear it!—I have often told you so. You must take me as I am. I am a wretch—broken by my distractions! I couldn't *bear* it when Arabella came—I felt so utterly miserable I had to come away. She seems to be your wife still, and Richard to be my husband!"

"But they are nothing to us!"

"Yes, dear friend, they are. I see marriage differently now. My babies have been taken from me to show me this! Arabella's child killing mine was a judgment—the right slaying the wrong. What, *what* shall I do! I am such a vile creature—too worthless to mix with ordinary human beings!"

"This is terrible!" said Jude, almost in tears. "It is monstrous and unnatural for you to be so remorseful when you have done no wrong!"

"Ah—you don't know my badness!"

He returned, vehemently: "I do! Every atom and dreg of it! You make me hate Christianity, or mysticism, or Sacerdotalism, or whatever it may be called, if it's that which has caused this deterioration in you. That a woman-poet, a woman-seer, a woman whose soul shone like a diamond—whom all the wise of the world would have been proud of, if they could have known you—should degrade herself like this! I am glad I had nothing to do with Divinity—damn glad—if it's going to ruin you in this way!"

"You are angry, Jude, and unkind to me, and don't see how things are."

"Then come along home with me, dearest, and perhaps I shall. I am over-burdened—and you, too, are unhinged just now." He put his arm round her and lifted her; but though she came, she preferred to walk without his support.

"I don't dislike you, Jude," she said, in a sweet and imploring voice. "I love you as much as ever! Only—I ought not to love you—any more. Oh, I must not any more!"

"I can't own it."

"But I have made up my mind that I am not your wife! I belong to him—I sacramentally joined myself to him for life. Nothing can alter it!"

"But surely we are man and wife, if ever two people were in this world! Nature's own marriage it is, unquestionably!"

"But not Heaven's. Another was made for me there, and ratified eternally in the church at Melchester."

"Sue, Sue—affliction has brought you to this unreasonable state! After converting me to your views on so many things, to find you suddenly turn to the right-about like this — for no reason whatever, confounding all you have formerly said through sentiment merely! You root out of me what little affection and reverence I had left in

me for the Church as an old acquaintance. . . . What I can't understand in you is your extraordinary blindness now to your old logic. Is it peculiar to you, or is it common to woman? Is a woman a thinking unit at all, or a fraction always wanting its integer? How you argued that marriage was only a clumsy contract—which it is—how you showed all the objections to it—all the absurdities! If two and two make four when we are happy together, surely they make four now? I can't understand it, I repeat!"

"Ah, dear Jude, that's because you are like a totally deaf man observing people listening to music. You say, 'What are they regarding? Nothing is there.' But something is."

"That is a hard saying from you, and not a true parallel! You threw off old husks of prejudices, and taught me to do it; and now you go back upon yourself. I confess I am utterly stultified in my estimate of you."

"Dear friend, my only friend, don't be hard with me! I can't help being as I am, and I am convinced I am right—that I see the light at last. But, oh, how to profit by it!"

They walked along a few more steps till they were outside the building, and she had returned the key. "Can this be the girl," said Jude, when she came back, feeling a slight renewal of elasticity now that he was in the open street—"can this be the girl who brought the Pagan deities into this most Christian city?—who mimicked Miss Fontover when she crushed them with her heel?—quoted Gibbon and Shelley and Mill? Where are dear Apollo and dear Venus now?"

"Oh, don't, don't be so cruel to me, Jude, and I so unhappy!" she sobbed. "I can't bear it! I was in error—I cannot reason with you. I was wrong—proud in my own conceit! Arabella's coming was the finish. Don't satirize me; it cuts like a knife!"

He flung his arms round her and kissed her passion-

ately there in the silent street, before she could hinder him. They went on till they came to a little coffee-house. "Jude," she said, with suppressed tears, "would you mind getting a lodging here?"

"I will—if, if you really wish? But do you? Let me go to our door and understand you."

He went and conducted her in. She said she wanted no supper, and went in the dark up-stairs and struck a light. Turning she found that Jude had followed her, and was standing at the chamber door. She went to him, put her hand in his, and said, "Good-night."

"But Sue! Don't we live here?"

"You said you would do as I wished!"

"Yes. Very well! . . . Perhaps it was wrong of me to argue distastefully as I have done! Perhaps, as we couldn't conscientiously marry at first in the old-fashioned way, we ought to have parted. Perhaps the world is not illuminated enough for such experiments as ours! Who were we, to think we could act as pioneers!"

"I am so glad you see that much, at any rate. I never deliberately meant to do as I did. I slipped into my false position through jealousy and agitation."

"But surely through love—you loved me?"

"Yes. But I wanted to let it stop there, and go on always as mere lovers; until—"

"But people in love couldn't live forever like that!"

"Women could; men can't, because they—won't. An average woman is in this superior to an average man—that she never instigates, only responds. We ought to have lived in mental communion, and no more."

"I was the unhappy cause of the change, as I have said before. . . . Well, as you will. . . . But human nature can't help being itself."

"Oh yes—that's just what it has to learn—self-mastery."

"I repeat—if either were to blame it was not you, but I."

"No—it was I. Your wickedness was only the natural man's desire to possess the woman. Mine was not the reciprocal wish till envy stimulated me to oust Arabella. I had thought I ought in charity to let you approach me —that it was damnably selfish to torture you as I did my other friend. But I shouldn't have given way if you hadn't broken me down by making me fear you would go back to her. . . . But don't let us say any more about it. Jude, will you leave me to myself now?"

"Yes. . . . But Sue—my wife, as you are!" he burst out— "my old reproach to you was, after all, a true one. You have never loved me as I love you—never—never! Yours is not a passionate heart—your heart does not burn in a flame! You are, upon the whole, cold—a sort of fay, or sprite—not a woman!"

"At first I did not love you, Jude; that I own. When I first knew you I merely wanted you to love me. I did not exactly flirt with you; but that inborn craving which undermines some women's morals almost more than unbridled passion—the craving to attract and captivate, regardless of the injury it may do the man—was in me; and when I found I had caught you, I was frightened. And then—I don't know how it was—I couldn't bear to let you go—possibly to Arabella again—and so I got to love you, Jude. But, you see, however it ended, it began in the selfish and cruel wish to make your heart ache for me without letting mine ache for you."

"And now you add to your cruelty by leaving me!"

"Ah — yes! The further I flounder, the more harm I do!"

"Oh, Sue!" said he, with a sudden sense of his own danger. "Do not do an immoral thing for moral reasons! You have been my social salvation. Stay with me for humanity's sake! You know what a weak fellow I am. My two Arch Enemies you know—my weakness for women and my impulse to strong liquor. Don't abandon me to them, Sue, to save your own soul only.

They have been kept entirely at a distance since you became my guardian angel! Since I have had you I have been able to go into any temptations of the sort without risk. Isn't my safety worth a little sacrifice of dogmatic principle? I am in terror lest, if you leave me, it will be with me another case of the pig that was washed turning back to his wallowing in the mire!"

Sue burst out weeping. "Oh, but you must not, Jude! You won't! I'll pray for you night and day!"

"Well, never mind; don't grieve," said Jude, generously. "I did suffer, God knows, about you at that time; and now I suffer again. But perhaps not so much as you. The woman mostly gets the worst of it in the long-run."

"She does."

"Unless she is absolutely worthless and contemptible! And this one is not that, anyhow!"

Sue drew a nervous breath or two. "She is—I fear. . . . Now, Jude—good-night—please!"

"I mustn't stay? Not just once more? As it has been so many times. Oh, Sue, my wife, why not?"

"No—no—not wife! . . . I am in your hands, Jude, don't tempt me back, now I have advanced so far!"

"Very well. I do your bidding. I owe that to you, darling, in penance for how I overruled it at the first time. My God, how selfish I was! Perhaps—perhaps I spoiled one of the highest and purest loves that ever existed between man and woman! . . . Then let the veil of our temple be rent in two from this hour!"

He went to the bed, removed one of the pair of pillows thereon, and flung it to the floor.

Sue looked at him, and, bending over the bed-rail, wept silently. "You don't see that it is a matter of conscience with me, and not of dislike to you!" she brokenly murmured. "Dislike to you! But I can't say any more—it breaks my heart—it will be undoing all I have begun! Jude—good-night!"

"Good-night," he said, and turned to go.

"Oh, but you shall kiss me!" said she, starting up. "I can't—bear—"

He clasped her, and kissed her weeping face as he had scarcely ever done before, and they remained in silence till she said, "Good-bye, good-bye!" And then gently pressing him away she got free, trying to mitigate the sadness by saying: "We'll be dear friends just the same, Jude, won't we? And we'll see each other sometimes—yes! and forget all this, and try to be as we were long ago?"

Jude did not permit himself to speak, but turned and descended the stairs.

IV

THE man whom Sue, in her mental volte-face, was now regarding as her inseparable husband, lived still at Marygreen.

On the day before the tragedy of the children, Phillotson had seen both her and Jude as they stood in the rain at Christminster watching the procession to the Theatre. But he had said nothing of it at the moment to his companion Gillingham, who, being an old friend, was staying with him at the village aforesaid, and had, indeed, suggested the day's trip to Christminster.

"What are you thinking of?" said Gillingham, as they went home. "The University degree you never obtained?"

"No, no," said Phillotson, gruffly. "Of somebody I saw to-day." In a moment he added, "Susanna."

"I saw her, too."

"You said nothing."

"I didn't wish to draw your attention to her. But, as you did see her, you should have said, 'How d'ye do, my dear-that-was?'"

"Ah, well. I might have. But what do you think of this: I have good reason for supposing that she was innocent when I divorced her—that I was all wrong. Yes, indeed! Awkward, isn't it?"

"She has taken care to set you right since, anyhow, apparently."

"H'm. That's a cheap sneer. I ought to have waited, unquestionably."

At the end of the week, when Gillingham had gone

back to his school near Shaston, Phillotson, as was his custom, went to Alfredston market; ruminating again on Arabella's intelligence as he walked down the long hill which he had known before Jude knew it, though his history had not beaten so intensely upon its incline. Arrived in the town he bought his usual weekly local paper; and when he had sat down in an inn to refresh himself for the five miles' walk back, he pulled the paper from his pocket and read a while. The account of the "Strange suicide of a stone-cutter's children" met his eye.

Unimpassioned as he was, it impressed him painfully, and puzzled him not a little, for he could not understand the age of the elder child being what it was stated to be. However, there was no doubt that the newspaper report was in some way true.

"Their cup of sorrow is now full!" he said; and thought and thought of Sue, and what she had gained by leaving him.

Arabella having made her home at Alfredston, and the school-master coming to market there every Saturday, it was not wonderful that in a few weeks they met again—the precise time being just after her return from Christminster, where she had stayed much longer than she had at first intended, keeping an interested eye on Jude, though Jude had seen no more of her. Phillotson was on his way homeward when he encountered Arabella, and she was approaching the town.

"You like walking out this way, Mrs. Cartlett?" he said.

"I've just begun to again," she replied. "It is where I lived as maid and wife, and all the past things of my life that are interesting to my feelings are mixed up with this road. And they have been stirred up in me too, lately; for I've been visiting at Christminster. Yes; I've seen Jude."

"Ah! How do they bear their terrible affliction?"

"In a ve-ry strange way—ve-ry strange! She don't live

with him any longer. I only heard of it as a certainty just before I left; though I had thought things were drifting that way from their manner when I called on them."

"Not live with her husband? Why, I should have thought 'twould have united them more."

"He's not her husband, after all. She has never really married him, although they have passed as man and wife so long. And now, instead of this sad event making 'em hurry up and get the thing done legally, she's took in a queer religious way, just as I was in my affliction at losing Cartlett, only hers is of a more 'sterical sort than mine. And she says, so I was told, that she's your wife in the eye of Heaven and the Church. Yours only, and can't be anybody else's by any act of man."

"Ah—indeed! . . . Separated, have they?"

"You see, the eldest boy was mine—"

"Oh—yours!"

"Yes, poor little fellow—born in lawful wedlock, thank God! And perhaps she feels, over and above other things, that I ought to have been in her place. I can't say. However, as for me, I am soon off from here. I've got father to look after now, and we can't live in such a humdrum place as this. I hope soon to be in a bar again at Christminster, or some other big town."

They parted. When Phillotson had ascended the hill a few steps he stopped, hastened back, and called her.

"What is, or was, their address?"

Arabella gave it.

"Thank you. Good-afternoon."

Arabella smiled grimly as she resumed her way, and practised dimple-making all along the road, from where the pollard willows begin to the old almshouses in the first street of the town.

Meanwhile Phillotson ascended to Marygreen, and for the first time during a lengthened period he lived with a forward eye. On crossing under the large trees of the

green to the humble school-house to which he had been reduced, he stood a moment, and pictured Sue coming out of the door to meet him. No man had ever suffered more inconvenience from his own charity, Christian or heathen, than Phillotson had done in letting Sue go. He had been knocked about from pillar to post at the hands of the virtuous almost beyond endurance; he had been nearly starved, and was now dependent entirely upon the very small stipend from the school of this village (where the parson had got ill-spoken of for befriending him). He had often thought of Arabella's remark that he should have been more severe with Sue, that her recalcitrant spirit would soon have been broken. Yet such was his obstinate and illogical disregard of opinion, and of the principles in which he had been trained, that his convictions on the rightness of his course with his wife had not been disturbed.

Principles which could be subverted by feeling in one direction were liable to the same catastrophe in another. The instincts which had allowed him to give Sue her liberty now enabled him to regard her as none the worse for her life with Jude. He wished for her still, in his curious way, if he did not love her, and, apart from policy, soon felt that he would be gratified to have her again as his, always provided that she came willingly.

But artifice was necessary, he had found, for stemming the cold and inhumane blast of the world's contempt. And here were the materials ready made. By getting Sue back and re-marrying her on the respectable plea of having entertained erroneous views of her, and gained his divorce wrongfully, he might acquire some comfort, resume his old courses, perhaps return to the Shaston school, if not even to the church itself as a licentiate.

He thought he would write to Gillingham to inquire his views, and what he thought of his, Phillotson's, sending a letter to her. Gillingham replied, naturally, that now she was gone it were best to let her be; and con-

sidered that if she were anybody's wife she was the wife of the man to whom she had borne three children and owed such tragical adventures. Probably, as his attachment to her seemed unusually strong, the singular pair would make their union legal in course of time, and all would be well, and decent, and in order.

"But they won't—Sue won't!" exclaimed Phillotson to himself. "Gillingham is so old-fashioned. She's affected by Christminster sentiment and teaching. I can see her views on the indissolubility of marriage well enough, and I know where she got them. They are not mine; but I shall make use of them to further mine."

He wrote a brief reply to Gillingham. "I know I am entirely wrong, but I don't agree with you. As to her having lived with and had three children by him, my feeling is (though I can advance no logical or moral defence of it, on the old lines) that it has done little more than finish her education. I shall write to her, and learn whether what that woman said is true or no."

As he had made up his mind to do this before he had written to his friend, there had not been much reason for writing to the latter at all. However, it was Phillotson's way to act thus.

He accordingly addressed a carefully considered epistle to Sue, and, knowing her emotional temperament, threw a Rhadamanthine strictness into it here and there, carefully hiding his heterodox feelings, not to frighten her. He stated that, it having come to his knowledge that her views had considerably changed, he felt compelled to say that his own, too, were largely modified by events subsequent to their parting. He would not conceal from her that passionate love had little to do with his communication. It arose from a wish to make their lives, if not a success, at least no such disastrous failure as they threatened to become, through his acting on what he had considered at the time a principle of justice, charity, and reason.

To indulge one's instinctive and uncontrolled sense of justice and right was not, he had found, permitted with impunity in an old civilization like ours. It was necessary to act under an acquired and artificial sense of the same if you wished to enjoy an average share of comfort and honor, and to let loving-kindness take care of itself.

He suggested that she should come to him there at Marygreen.

On second thoughts he took out the last paragraph but one; and having rewritten the letter, he despatched it immediately, and in some excitement awaited the issue.

A few days after a figure moved through the white fog which enveloped the Beersheba suburb of Christminster towards the quarter in which Jude Fawley had taken up his lodging since his division from Sue. A timid knock sounded upon the door of his abode.

It was evening, so he was at home; and by a species of divination he jumped up and rushed to the door himself.

"Will you come out with me? I would rather not come in. I want to—to talk with you, and to go with you to the cemetery."

It had been in the trembling accents of Sue that these words came. Jude put on his hat. "It is dreary for you to be out," he said. "But if you prefer not to come in, I don't mind."

"Yes—I do. I shall not keep you long."

Jude was too much affected to go on talking at first; she, too, was now such a mere cluster of nerves that all initiatory power seemed to have left her, and they proceeded through the fog like Acherontic shades for a long while, without sound or gesture.

"I want to tell you," she presently said, her voice now quick, now slow, "so that you may not hear of it by chance. I am going back to Richard. He has—so magnanimously—agreed to forgive all."

"Going back? How can you go—"

"He is going to marry me again. That is for form's sake, and to satisfy the world, which does not see things as they are. But, of course, I *am* his wife already. Nothing has changed that."

He turned upon her with an anguish that was wellnigh fierce.

"But you are *my* wife! Yes, you are! You know it! I have always regretted that feint of ours in going away and pretending to come back legally married, to save appearances. I loved you and you loved me, and we closed with each other, and that made the marriage. We still love—you as well as I—I *know* it, Sue! Therefore, our marriage is not cancelled."

"Yes; I know how you see it," she answered, with despairing self-suppression. "But I am going to marry him again, as it would be called by you. Strictly speaking, you, too—don't mind my saying it, Jude!—you should take back—Arabella."

"I should? Good God, what next! But how if you and I had married legally, as we were on the point of doing?"

"I should have felt just the same—that ours was not a marriage. And I would go back to Richard without repeating the sacrament if he asked me. But 'the world and its ways have a certain worth' (I suppose), therefore I concede a repetition of the ceremony. . . . Don't crush all the life out of me by satire and argument, I implore you! I was strongest once, I know, and perhaps I treated you cruelly. But, Jude, return good for evil! I am the weaker now. Don't retaliate upon me, but be kind. Oh, be kind to me—a poor, wicked woman who is trying to mend!"

He shook his head hopelessly, his eyes wet. The blow of her bereavement seemed to have destroyed her reasoning faculty. The once keen vision was dimmed. "All wrong, all wrong!" he said, huskily. "Error—perversity!

It drives me out of my senses. Do you care for him? Do you love him? You know you don't! It will be a fanatic prostitution—God forgive me, yes—that's what it will be!"

"I don't love him—I must, must own it, in deepest remorse! But I shall try to learn to love him by obeying him."

Jude argued, urged, implored; but her conviction was proof against all. It seemed to be the one thing on earth on which she was firm, and that her firmness in this had left her tottering in every other impulse and wish she possessed.

"I have been considerate enough to let you know the whole truth, and to tell it you myself," she said, in cut tones, "that you might not consider yourself slighted by hearing of it at second-hand. I have even owned the extreme fact that I do not love him. I did not think you would be so rough with me for doing so! I was going to ask you—"

"To give you away?"

"No. To send—my boxes to me—if you would. But I suppose you won't."

"Why, of course I will. What — isn't he coming to fetch you—to marry you from here? He won't condescend to do that?"

"No—I won't let him. I go to him voluntarily, just as I went away from him. We are to be married at his little church at Marygreen."

She was so sadly sweet in what he called her wrongheadedness that Jude could not help being moved to tears more than once for pity of her. "I never knew such a woman for doing impulsive penances as you, Sue! No sooner does one expect you to go straight on, as the one rational proceeding, than you double round the corner!"

"Ah, well, let that go! . . . Jude, I must say goodbye! But I wanted you to go to the cemetery with me.

Let our farewell be there—beside the graves of those who died to bring home to me the error of my views."

They turned in the direction of the place. and the gate was opened to them on application. Sue had been there often, and she knew the way to the spot in the dark. They reached it, and stood still.

"It is here—I should like to part," said she.

"So be it."

"Don't think me hard because I have acted on conviction. Your generous devotion to me is unparalleled, Jude. Your worldly failure, if you have failed, is to your credit rather than to your blame. Remember that the best and greatest among mankind are those who do themselves no worldly good. Every successful man is more or less a selfish man. The devoted fail. . . . 'Charity seeketh not her own.'"

"In that chapter we are at one, ever beloved darling, and on it we'll part friends. Its verses will stand fast when all the rest that you call religion has passed away!"

"Well—don't discuss it. Good-bye, Jude, my fellow-sinner, and kindest friend!"

"Good-bye, my mistaken wife. Good-bye!"

V

THE next afternoon the familiar Christminster fog still hung over all things. Sue's slim shape was only just discernible going towards the station.

Jude had no heart to go to his work that day. Neither could he go anywhere in the direction by which she would be likely to pass. He went in an opposite one—to a dreary, strange, flat scene, where boughs dripped, and coughs and consumption lurked, and where he had never been before.

"Sue's gone from me—gone!" he murmured, miserably.

She in the mean time had left by the train, and reached Alfredston Road, where she entered the steam-tram and was conveyed into the town. It had been her request to Phillotson that he should not meet her. She wished, she said, to come to him voluntarily, to his very house and hearth-stone.

It was Friday evening, which had been chosen because the school-master was disengaged at four o'clock that day till the Monday morning following. The little car she hired at The Bear to drive her to Marygreen set her down at the end of the lane, half a mile from the village, by her desire, and preceded her to the school-house with such portion of her luggage as she had brought. On its return she encountered it, and asked the driver if he had found the master's house open. The man informed her that he had, and that her things had been taken in by the school-master himself.

She could now enter Marygreen without exciting much observation. She crossed by the well and under the trees

to the pretty new school on the other side, and lifted the latch of the dwelling without knocking. Phillotson stood in the middle of the room, awaiting her, as requested.

"I've come, Richard," said she, looking pale and shaken, and sinking into a chair. "I cannot believe—you forgive your—wife!"

"Everything, darling Susanna," said Phillotson.

She started at the endearment, though it had been spoken advisedly, without fervor. Then she nerved herself again.

"My children—are dead—and it is right that they should be! I am glad—almost. They were sin-begotten. They were sacrificed to teach me how to live!—their death was the first stage of my purification. That's why they have not died in vain! . . . You will take me back?"

He was so stirred by her pitiful words and tone that he did more than he had meant to do. He bent and kissed her cheek.

Sue imperceptibly shrank away, her flesh quivering under the touch of his lips.

Phillotson's heart sank, for desire was renascent in him. "You still have an aversion to me?"

"Oh no, dear—I—have been driving through the damp, and I was chilly!" she said, with a hurried smile of apprehension. "When are we going to have the marriage? Soon?"

"To-morrow morning, early, I thought—if you really wish. I am sending round to the vicar to let him know you are come. I have told him all, and he highly approves—he says it will bring our lives to a triumphant and satisfactory issue. But—are you sure of yourself? It is not too late to refuse now if—you think you can't bring yourself to it, you know."

"Yes, yes, I can! I want it done quick. Tell him, tell him at once! My strength is tried by the undertaking—I can't wait long!"

"Have something to eat and drink then, and go over

to your room at Mrs. Edlin's. I'll tell the vicar half-past eight to-morrow, before anybody is about—if that's not too soon for you. My friend Gillingham is here to help us in the ceremony. He's been good enough to come all the way from Shaston at great inconvenience to himself."

Unlike a woman in ordinary, whose eye is so keen for material things, Sue seemed to see nothing of the room they were in, or any detail of her environment. But on moving across the parlor to put down her muff she uttered a little "Oh!" and grew paler than before. Her look was that of the condemned criminal who catches sight of his coffin.

"What?" said Phillotson.

The flap of the bureau chanced to be open, and in placing her muff upon it her eye had caught a document which lay there. "Oh — only a — funny surprise!" she said, trying to laugh away her cry as she came back to the table.

"Ah! yes," said Phillotson. "The license. . . . It has just come."

Gillingham now joined them from his room above, and Sue nervously made herself agreeable to him by talking on whatever she thought likely to interest him, except herself, though that interested him most of all. She obediently ate some supper, and prepared to leave for her lodging hard by. Phillotson crossed the green with her, bidding her good-night at Mrs. Edlin's door.

The old woman accompanied Sue to her temporary quarters and helped her to unpack. Among other things she laid out a night-gown tastefully embroidered.

"Oh, I didn't know *that* was put in!" said Sue, quickly. "I didn't mean it to be. Here is a different one." She handed a new and absolutely plain garment, of coarse and unbleached calico.

"But this is the prettiest," said Mrs. Edlin. "That one is no better than very sackcloth o' Scripture!"

"Yes, I meant it to be. Give me the other."

She took it, and began rending it with all her might, the tears resounding through the house like a screech-owl.

"But, my dear, dear!—whatever. . . ."

"It is adulterous! It signifies what I don't feel—I bought it long ago—to please Jude. It must be destroyed!"

Mrs. Edlin lifted her hands, and Sue excitedly continued to tear the linen into strips, laying the pieces in the fire.

"You med ha' give it to me!" said the widow. "It do make my heart ache to see such pretty open-work as that a-burned by the flames—not that ornamental night-rails can be much use to a' ould 'ooman like I. My days for such be all past and gone!"

"It is an accursed thing—it reminds me of what I want to forget!" Sue repeated. "It is only fit for the fire."

"Lord, you be too strict! What do ye use such words for, and condemn to hell your dear little innocent children that's lost to 'ee! Upon my life, I don't call that religion!"

Sue flung her face upon the bed, sobbing. "Oh, don't, don't! That kills me!" She remained shaken with her grief, and slipped down upon her knees.

"I'll tell 'ee what—you ought not to marry this man again!" said Mrs. Edlin, indignantly. "You are in love wi' t'other still!"

"Yes, I must—I am his already."

"Pshoo! You be t'other man's. If you didn't like to commit yourselves to the binding vow again, just at first, 'twas all the more credit to your consciences, considering your reasons, and you med ha' lived on, and made it all right at last. After all, it concerned nobody but your own two selves."

"Richard says he'll have me back, and I'm bound to go! If he had refused, it might not have been so much my duty to—give up Jude. But—" She remained with her face in the bed-clothes, and Mrs. Edlin left the room.

Phillotson in the interval had gone back to his friend Gillingham, who still sat over the supper-table. They soon rose, and walked out on the green to smoke a while. A light was burning in Sue's room, a shadow moving now and then across the blind.

Gillingham had evidently been impressed with the indefinable charm of Sue, and after a silence he said: "Well, you've all but got her again at last. She can't very well go a second time. The pear has dropped into your hand."

"Yes!... I suppose I am right in taking her at her word. I confess there seems a touch of selfishness in it. Apart from her being what she is, of course, a luxury for a fogey like me, it will set me right in the eyes of the clergy and orthodox laity, who have never forgiven me for letting her go. So I may get back in some degree into my old track."

"Well, if you've got any sound reason for marrying her again, do it now, in God's name. I was always against your opening the cage door and letting the bird go in such an obviously suicidal way. You might have been a school inspector by this time, or a reverend, if you hadn't been so weak about her."

"I did myself irreparable damage—I know it."

"Once you've got her housed again, stick to her."

Phillotson was more evasive to-night. He did not care to admit clearly that his taking Sue to him again had at bottom nothing to do with repentance of letting her go, but was, primarily, a human instinct flying in the face of custom and profession. He said, "Yes, I shall do that. I know woman better now. Whatever justice there was in releasing her, there was little logic, for one holding my views on other subjects."

Gillingham looked at him, and wondered whether it would ever happen that the reactionary spirit induced by the world's sneers and his own physical wishes would make Phillotson more orthodoxly cruel to her

"SUE CONTINUED TO TEAR THE LINEN INTO STRIPS"

than he had erstwhile been informally and perversely kind.

"I perceive it won't do to give way to impulse," Phillotson resumed, feeling more and more every minute the necessity of acting up to his position. "I flew in the face of the Church's teaching; but I did it without malice prepense. Women are so strange in their influence that they tempt you to misplaced kindness. However, I know myself better now. A little judicious severity, perhaps. . . ."

"Yes; but you must tighten the reins by degrees only. Don't be too strenuous at first. She'll come to any terms in time."

The caution was unnecessary, though Phillotson did not say so. "I remember what my vicar at Shaston said, when I left after the row that was made about my agreeing to her elopement. 'The only thing you can do to retrieve your position and hers is to admit your error in not restraining her with a wise and strong hand, and to get her back again if she'll come, and be firm in the future.' But I was so headstrong at that time that I paid no heed. And that after the divorce she should have thought of doing so I did not dream."

The gate of Mrs. Edlin's cottage clicked, and somebody began crossing in the direction of the school. Phillotson said "Good-night."

"Oh, is that Mr. Phillotson?" said Mrs. Edlin. "I was going over to see 'ee. I've been up-stairs with her, helping her to unpack her things; and upon my word, sir, I don't think this ought to be!"

"What—the wedding?"

"Yes. She's forcing herself to it, poor dear little thing, and you've no notion what she's suffering. I was never much for religion nor against it, but it can't be right to let her do this, and you ought to persuade her out of it. Of course, everybody will say it was very good and forgiving of 'ee to take her to 'ee again. But, for my part, I don't."

"It's her wish, and I am willing," said Phillotson, with grave reserve, opposition making him illogically tenacious now. "A great piece of laxity will be rectified."

"I don't believe it. She's his wife, if anybody's. She's had three children by him, and he loves her dearly; and it's a wicked shame to egg her on to this, poor little quivering thing! She's got nobody on her side. The one man who'd be her friend the obstinate creature won't allow to come near her. What first put her into this mood o' mind, I wonder?"

"I can't tell. Not I, certainly. It is all voluntary on her part. Now that's all I have to say." Phillotson spoke stiffly. "You've turned round, Mrs. Edlin. It is unseemly of you!"

"Well, I knowed you'd be affronted at what I had to say; but I don't mind that. The truth's the truth."

"I'm not affronted, Mrs. Edlin. You've been too kind a neighbor for that. But I must be allowed to know what's best for myself and Susanna. I suppose you won't go to church with us, then?"

"No. Be hanged if I can! . . . I don't know what the times be coming to! Matrimony have growed to be that serious in these days that one really do feel afeared to move in it at all. In my time we took it more careless, and I don't know that we was any the worse for it! When I and my poor man were jined in it we kept up the junketing all the week, and drunk the parish dry, and had to borrow half a crown to begin housekeeping!"

When Mrs. Edlin had gone back to her cottage Phillotson spoke moodily. "I don't know whether I ought to do it—at any rate, quite so rapidly."

"Why?"

"If she is really compelling herself to this against her instincts—merely from this new sense of duty or religion—I ought, perhaps, to let her wait a bit."

"Now you've got so far you ought not to back out of it. That's my opinion."

"I can't very well put it off now, that's true. But I had a qualm when she gave that little cry at sight of the license."

"Now, never you have qualms, old boy. I mean to give her away to-morrow morning, and you mean to take her. It has always been on my conscience that I didn't urge more objections to your letting her go, and now we've got to this stage I sha'n't be content if I don't help you to set the matter right."

Phillotson nodded, and, seeing how stanch his friend was, became more frank. "No doubt when it gets known what I've done I shall be thought a soft fool by many. But they don't know Sue as I do. Hers is such a straight and open nature that I don't think she has ever done anything against her conscience. The fact of her having lived with Fawley goes for nothing. At the time she left me for him she thought she was quite within her right. Now she thinks otherwise."

The next morning came, and the self-sacrifice of the woman on the altar of what she was pleased to call her principles was acquiesced in by these two friends, each from his own point of view. Phillotson went across to the Widow Edlin's to fetch Sue a few minutes after eight o'clock. The fog of the previous day or two on the lowlands had travelled up here by now, and the trees on the green caught armfuls, and turned them into showers of big drops. The bride was waiting, ready—bonnet and all on. She had never in her life looked so much like the lily her name connoted as she did in that pallid morning light. Chastened, world-weary, remorseful, the strain on her nerves had preyed upon her flesh and bones, and she appeared smaller in outline than she had formerly done, though Sue had not been a large woman in her days of rudest health.

"Prompt," said the school-master, magnanimously taking her hand. But he checked his impulse to kiss her, remembering her start of yesterday, which unpleasantly lingered in his mind.

Gillingham joined them, and they left the house, Widow Edlin continuing steadfast in her refusal to assist in the ceremony.

"Where is the church?" said Sue. She had not lived there for any length of time since the old church was pulled down, and in her preoccupation forgot the new one.

"Up here," said Phillotson; and presently the tower loomed large and solemn in the fog. The vicar had already crossed to the building, and when they entered he said, pleasantly, "We almost want candles."

"You do—wish me to be yours, Richard?" gasped Sue, in a whisper.

"Certainly, dear; above all things in the world."

Sue said no more; and for the second or third time he felt he was not quite following out the humane instinct which had induced him to let her go.

There they stood, five altogether: the parson, the clerk, the couple, and Gillingham; and the holy ordinance was resolemnized forthwith. In the nave of the edifice were two or three villagers, and when the clergyman came to the words, "What God hath joined," a woman's voice from among these was heard to utter audibly:

"God hath jined indeed!"

It was like a re-enactment by the ghosts of their former selves of the similar scene which had taken place at Melchester years before. When the books were signed the vicar congratulated the husband and wife on having performed a noble and righteous and mutually forgiving act. "All's well that ends well," he said, smiling. "May you long be happy together, after thus having been 'saved as by fire.'"

They came down the nearly empty building, and crossed to the school-house. Gillingham wanted to get home that night, and left early. He, too, congratulated the couple. "Now," he said, in parting from Phillotson, who walked out a little way, "I shall be able to tell the people

in your native place a good round tale; and they'll all say 'Well done,' depend on it."

When the school-master got back Sue was making a pretence of doing some housewifery, as if she lived there. But she seemed timid at his approach.

"Of course, my dear, I sha'n't expect to intrude upon your personal privacy any more than I did before," he said, gravely. "It is for our good socially to do this, and that's its justification, if it was not my reason."

Sue brightened a little.

VI

THE place was the door of Jude's lodging in the outskirts of Christminster — far from the precincts of St. Silas's, where he had formerly lived, which saddened him to sickness. The rain was coming down. A woman in shabby black stood on the door-step talking to Jude, who held the door in his hand.

"I am lonely, destitute, and houseless—that's what I am! Father has turned me out-of-doors after borrowing every penny I'd got, to put it into his business, and then accusing me of laziness when I was only waiting for a situation. I am at the mercy of the world! If you can't take me and help me, Jude, I must go to the workhouse, or to something worse. Only just now two undergraduates winked at me as I came along. 'Tis hard for a woman to keep virtuous where there's so many young men!"

The woman in the rain who spoke thus was Arabella, the evening being that of the day after Sue's remarriage with Phillotson.

"I am sorry for you, but I am only in lodgings," said Jude, coldly.

"Then you turn me away?"

"I'll give you enough to get food and lodging for a few days."

"Oh, but can't you have the kindness to take me in? I cannot endure going to a public-house to lodge; and I am so lonely. Please, Jude, for old times' sake!"

"No, no," said Jude, hastily. "I don't want to be reminded of those things; and if you talk about them I shall not help you."

"Then I suppose I must go!" said Arabella. She bent her head against the door-post, and began sobbing.

"The house is full," said Jude, "and I have only a little extra room—not much more than a closet—where I keep my tools and templates and the few books I have left!"

"That would be a palace for me!"

"There is no bedstead in it."

"A bit of a bed could be made on the floor. It would be good enough for me."

Unable to be harsh with her, and not knowing what to do, Jude called the man who let the lodgings, and said this was an acquaintance of his in great distress for want of temporary shelter.

"You may remember me as barmaid at The Lamb and Flag formerly?" spoke up Arabella. "My father has insulted me this afternoon, and I've left him, though without a penny."

The householder said he could not recall her features. "But still, if you are a friend of Mr. Fawley's, we'll do what we can for a day or two—if he'll make himself answerable."

"Yes, yes," said Jude. "She has really taken me quite unawares, but I should wish to help her out of her difficulty." And an arrangement was ultimately come to under which a bed was to be thrown down in Jude's lumber-room, to make it comfortable for Arabella till she could get out of the strait she was in — not by her own fault, as she declared — and return to her father's again.

While they were waiting for this to be done, Arabella said: "You know the news, I suppose?"

"I guess what you mean, but I know nothing."

"I had a letter from Anny at Alfredston to-day. She had just heard that the wedding was to be yesterday, but she didn't know if it had come off."

"I don't wish to talk of it."

"No, no; of course you don't. Only it shows what kind of woman—"

"Don't speak of her, I say! She's a fool!—And she's an angel, too, poor dear!"

"If it's done, he'll have a chance of getting back to his old position, by everybody's account, so Anny says. All his well-wishers will be pleased, including the bishop himself."

"Do spare me, Arabella."

Arabella was duly installed in the little attic, and at first she did not come near Jude at all. She went to and fro, about her own business, which, when they met for a moment on the stairs or in the passage, she informed him was that of obtaining another place in the occupation she understood best. When Jude suggested London as affording the most likely opening in the liquor-trade, she shook her head. "No—the temptations are too many," she said. "Any humble tavern in the country before that for me."

On the Sunday morning following, when he breakfasted later than on other days, she meekly asked him if she might come in to breakfast with him, as she had broken her teapot, and could not replace it immediately, the shops being shut.

"Yes, if you like," he said, indifferently.

While they sat without speaking she suddenly observed: "You seem all in a brood, old man. I'm sorry for you."

"I am all in a brood."

"It is about her, I know. It's no business of mine, but I could find out all about the wedding—if it really did take place—if you wanted to know."

"How could you?"

"I wanted to go to Alfredston to get a few things I left there, and I could see Anny, who'll be sure to have heard all about it, as she has friends at Marygreen."

Jude could not bear to acquiesce in this proposal; but his suspense pitted itself against his discretion, and won

in the struggle. "You can ask about it if you like," he said. "I've not heard a sound from there. It must have been very private, if—they have married."

"I am afraid I haven't enough cash to take me there and back, or I should have gone before. I must wait till I have earned some."

"Oh—I can pay the journey for you," he said, impatiently. And thus his suspense as to Sue's welfare, and the possible marriage, moved him to despatch for intelligence the last emissary he would have thought of choosing deliberately.

Arabella went, Jude requesting her to be home not later than by the seven o'clock train. When she had gone he said: "Why should I have charged her to be back by a particular time? She's nothing to me—nor the other, neither."

But having finished work, he could not help going to the station to meet Arabella, dragged thither by feverish haste to get the news she might bring, and know the worst. Arabella had made dimples most successfully all the way home, and when she stepped out of the railway carriage she smiled. He merely said "Well?" with the very reverse of a smile.

"They are married."

"Yes—of course they are!" he returned. She observed, however, the hard strain upon his lip as he spoke.

"Anny says she has heard from Belinda, her relation out at Marygreen, that it was very sad, and curious."

"How do you mean sad? She wanted to marry him again, didn't she—and he her?"

"Yes—that was it. She wanted to in one sense, but not in the other. Mrs. Edlin was much upset by it all, and spoke out her mind at Phillotson. But Sue was that excited about it that she burned her best embroidery, that she'd worn with you, to blot you out entirely. Well—if a woman feels like it, she ought to do it. I commend her for it, though others don't." Arabella sighed. "She

felt he was her only husband, and that she belonged to nobody else in the sight of God A'mighty while he lived. Perhaps another woman feels the same about herself, too!" Arabella sighed again.

"I don't want any cant!" exclaimed Jude.

"It isn't cant," said Arabella. "I feel exactly the same as she!"

He closed that issue by remarking abruptly: "Well—now I know all I wanted to know. Many thanks for your information. I am not going back to my lodgings just yet." And he left her straightway.

In his misery and depression Jude walked to wellnigh every spot in the city that he had visited with Sue; thence he did not know whither, and then thought of going home to his usual evening meal. But having all the vices of his virtues, and some to spare, he turned into a public-house for the first time during many months. Among the possible consequences of her marriage, Sue had not dwelt on this.

Arabella, meanwhile, had gone back. The evening passed, and Jude did not return. At half-past nine Arabella herself went out, first proceeding to an outlying district near the river, where her father lived, and had opened a small and precarious pork-shop lately.

"Well," she said to him, "for all your rowing me that night, I've come back, for I have something to tell you. I think I shall get married and settled again. Only you must help me; and you can do no less, after what I've stood 'ee."

"I'll do anything to get thee off my hands!"

"Very well. I am now going to look for my young man. He's on the loose, I'm afraid, and I must get him home. All I want you to do to-night is not to fasten the door, in case I should want to sleep here, and should be late."

"I thought you'd soon get tired of giving yourself airs and keeping away!"

"Well—don't do the door. That's all I say."

She then sallied out again, and first hastening back to Jude's to make sure that he had not returned, began her search for him. A shrewd guess as to his probable course took her straight to the tavern which Jude had formerly frequented, and where she had been barmaid for a brief term. She had no sooner opened the door of the "Private Bar" than her eyes fell upon him—sitting in the shade at the back of the compartment, with his eyes fixed on the floor in a blank stare. He was drinking nothing stronger than ale just then. He did not observe her, and she entered and sat beside him.

Jude looked up, and said, without surprise, "You've come to have something, Arabella? . . . I'm trying to forget her; that's all! But I can't; and I am going home." She saw that he was a little way on in liquor, but only a little as yet.

"I've come entirely to look for you, dear boy. You are not well. Now you must have something better than that." Arabella held up her finger to the barmaid. "You shall have a liqueur—that's better fit for a man of education than beer. You shall have maraschino, or curaçoa, dry or sweet, or cherry brandy. I'll treat you, poor chap!"

"I don't care which! Say cherry brandy. . . . Sue has served me badly, very badly. I didn't expect it of Sue! I stuck to her, and she ought to have stuck to me. I'd have sold my soul for her sake, but she wouldn't risk hers a jot for me. To save her own soul she lets mine go damn! . . . But it isn't her fault, poor little girl—I am sure it isn't."

How Arabella had obtained money did not appear, but she ordered a liqueur each, and paid for them. When they had drunk these Arabella suggested another; and Jude had the pleasure of being, as it were, personally conducted through the varieties of spirituous delectation by one who knew the landmarks well. Arabella kept very

considerably in the rear of Jude; but though she only sipped where he drank, she took as much as she could safely take without losing her head—which was not a little, as the crimson upon her countenance showed.

Her tone towards him to-night was uniformly soothing and cajoling; and whenever he said, "I don't care what happens to me," a thing he did continually, she replied, "But I do very much!" The closing hour came, and they were compelled to turn out; whereupon Arabella put her arm round his waist, and guided his unsteady footsteps.

When they were in the streets she said: "I don't know what our landlord will say to my bringing you home in this state. I expect we are fastened out, so that he'll have to come down and let us in."

"I don't know—I don't know."

"That's the worst of not having a home of your own. I tell you, Jude, what we had best do. Come round to my father's—I made it up with him a bit to-day. I can let you in, and nobody will see you at all; and by to-morrow morning you'll be all right."

"Anything — anywhere," replied Jude. "What the devil does it matter to me?"

"They went along together, like any other fuddling couple, her arm still round his waist, and his, at last, round hers; though with no amatory intent, but merely because he was weary, unstable, and in need of support.

"This—is th' Martyrs'—burning-place," he stammered, as they dragged across a broad street. "I remember—in old Fuller's *Holy State*—and I am reminded of it—by our passing by here—old Fuller in his *Holy State* says that at the burning of Ridley, Doctor Smith — preached sermon, and took as his text '*Though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*' Often think of it as I pass here. Ridley was a—"

"Yes. Exactly. Very thoughtful of you, deary, even though it hasn't much to do with our present business."

"Why, yes it has! I'm giving my body to be burned!

But—ah—you don't understand!—it wants Sue to understand such things! And I was her seducer—poor little girl! And she's gone—and I don't care about myself! Do what you like with me! . . . And yet she did it for conscience' sake, poor little Sue!"

"Hang her!—I mean, I think she was right," hiccoughed Arabella. "I've my feelings too, like her; and I feel I belong to you in Heaven's eye, and to nobody else, till death us do part! It is—hic—never too late—hic—to mend!"

They had reached her father's house, and she softly unfastened the door, groping about for a light within.

The circumstances were not altogether unlike those of their entry into the cottage at Cresscombe, such a long time before. Nor were perhaps Arabella's motives. But Jude did not think of that, though she did.

"I can't find the matches, dear," she said, when she had fastened up the door. "But never mind—this way. As quiet as you can, please."

"It is as dark as pitch," said Jude.

"Give me your hand, and I'll lead you. That's it. Just sit down here, and I'll pull off your boots. I don't want to wake him."

"Who?"

"Father. He'd make a row, perhaps."

She pulled off his boots. "Now," she whispered, "take hold of me—never mind your weight. Now—first stair, second stair—"

"But—are we out in our old house by Marygreen?" asked the stupefied Jude. "I haven't been inside it for years till now! Hey? And where are my books? That s what I want to know?"

"We are at my house, dear, where there's nobody to spy out how ill you are. Now—third stair, fourth stair—that's it. Now we shall get on."

VII

ARABELLA was preparing breakfast in the down-stairs room of this small, recently hired tenement of her father's. She put her head into the little pork-shop in front, and told Mr. Donn it was ready. Donn, endeavoring to look like a master pork-butcher, in a greasy blue blouse, and with a strap round his waist from which a steel dangled, came in promptly.

"You must mind the shop this morning," he said, casually. "I've to go and get some inwards and half a pig from Lumsdon, and to call elsewhere. If you live here you must put your shoulder to the wheel, at least till I get the business started!"

"Well, for to-day I can't say." She looked deedily into his face. "I've got a prize up-stairs."

"Oh!—What's that?"

"A husband—almost."

"No!"

"Yes. It's Jude. He's come back to me."

"Your old original one? Well, I'm damned!"

"Well, I always did like him, that I will say."

"But how does he come to be up there?" said Donn, humor-struck, and nodding to the ceiling.

"Don't ask inconvenient questions, father. What we've to do is to keep him here till he and I are—as we were."

"How was that?"

"Married."

"Ah. . . . Well, it is the rummest thing I ever heard of—marrying an old husband again, and so much new blood

in the world! He's no catch, to my thinking. I'd have had a new one while I was about it."

"It isn't rum for a woman to want her old husband back, for respectability, though for a man to want his old wife back—well, perhaps it is funny, rather!" And Arabella was suddenly seized with a fit of loud laughter, in which her father joined more moderately.

"Be civil to him, and I'll do the rest," she said, when she had recovered seriousness. "He told me this morning that his head ached fit to burst, and he hardly seemed to know where he was. And no wonder, considering how he mixed his drink last night. We must keep him jolly and cheerful here for a day or two, and not let him go back to his lodging. Whatever you advance I'll pay back to you again. But I must go up and see how he is now, poor deary."

Arabella ascended the stairs, softly opened the door of the first bedroom, and peeped in. Finding that her shorn Samson was asleep, she entered to the bedside and stood regarding him. The fevered flush on his face from the debauch of the previous evening lessened the fragility of his ordinary appearance, and his long lashes, dark brows and curly black hair and beard against the white pillow completed the physiognomy of one whom Arabella, as a woman of rank passions, still felt it worth while to recapture—highly important to recapture as a woman straitened both in means and in reputation. Her ardent gaze seemed to affect him; his quick breathing became suspended, and he opened his eyes.

"How are you now, dear?" said she. "It is I—Arabella."

"Ah!—where— Oh yes, I remember! You gave me shelter. . . . I am stranded—ill—demoralized—damn bad! That's what I am!"

"Then do stay there. There's nobody in the house but father and me, and you can rest till you are thoroughly well. I'll tell them at the stone-works that you are knocked up."

"I wonder what they are thinking at the lodgings."

"I'll go round and explain. Perhaps you had better let me pay up, or they'll think we've run away."

"Yes. You'll find enough money in my pocket there."

Quite indifferent, and shutting his eyes because he could not bear the daylight in his throbbing eyeballs, Jude seemed to doze again. Arabella took his purse, softly left the room, and, putting on her out-door things, went off to the lodgings she and he had quitted the evening before.

Scarcely half an hour had elapsed ere she reappeared round the corner, walking beside a lad wheeling a truck, on which were piled all Jude's household possessions, and also the few of Arabella's things which she had taken to the lodging for her short sojourn there. Jude was in such physical pain from his unfortunate break-down of the previous night, and in such mental pain from the loss of Sue and from having yielded in his half-somnolent state to Arabella, that when he saw his few chattels unpacked and standing before his eyes in this strange bedroom, intermixed with woman's apparel, he scarcely considered how they had come there, or what their coming signalized.

"Now," said Arabella to her father, down-stairs, "we must keep plenty of good liquor going in the house these next few days. I know his nature, and if he once gets into that fearfully low state that he does get into sometimes, he'll never do the honorable thing by me in this world, and I shall be left in the lurch. He must be kept cheerful. He has a little money in the savings-bank, and he has given me his purse to pay for anything necessary. Well, that will be the license; for I must have that ready at hand, to catch him the moment he's in the humor. You must pay for the liquor. A few friends and a quiet, convivial party would be the thing if we could get it up. It would advertise the shop, and help me too."

"That can be got up easy enough by anybody who'll

afford victuals and drink. . . . Well, yes—it would advertise the shop—that's true."

Three days later, when Jude had recovered somewhat from the fearful throbbing of his eyes and brain, but was still considerably confused in his mind by what had been supplied to him by Arabella during the interval—to keep him jolly, as she expressed it—the little convivial gathering suggested by her, to wind Jude up to the striking-point, took place.

Donn had only just opened his miserable little pork-and-sausage shop, which had as yet scarce any customers; nevertheless, that party advertised it well, and the Donns acquired a real notoriety among a certain class in Christminster who knew not the colleges, nor their works, nor their ways. Jude was asked if he could suggest any guest in addition to those named by Arabella and her father, and in a saturnine humor of perfect recklessness mentioned Uncle Joe, and Stagg, and the decayed auctioneer, and others whom he remembered as having been frequenters of the well-known tavern during his bout therein years before. He also suggested Freckles and Bower o' Bliss. Arabella took him at his word so far as the men went, but drew the line at the ladies.

Another man they knew, Tinker Taylor, though he lived in the same street, was not invited; but as he went homeward from a late job on the evening of the party, he had occasion to call at the shop for trotters. There were none in, but he was promised some the next morning. While making his inquiry Taylor glanced into the back room, and saw the guests sitting round, card-playing and drinking and otherwise enjoying themselves at Donn's expense. He went home to bed, and on his way out next morning wondered how the party went off. He thought it hardly worth while to call at the shop for his provisions at that hour, Donn and his daughter being probably not up if they caroused late the night before. However, he found in passing that the door was open,

and he could hear voices within, though the shutters of the meat-stall were not down. He went and tapped at the sitting-room door, and opened it.

"Well, to be sure!" he said, astonished.

Hosts and guests were sitting card-playing, smoking, and talking, precisely as he had left them eleven hours earlier; the gas was burning and the curtains drawn, though it had been broad daylight for two hours out-of-doors.

"Yes!" cried Arabella, laughing, "here we are, just the same. We ought to be ashamed of ourselves, oughtn't we? But it is a sort of house-warming, you see, and our friends are in no hurry. Come in, Mr. Taylor, and sit down."

The tinker, or, rather, reduced ironmonger, was nothing loath, and entered and took a seat. "I shall lose a quarter, but never mind," he said. "Well, really, I could hardly believe my eyes when I looked in! It seemed as if I was flung back again into last night all of a sudden."

"So you are. Pour out for Mr. Taylor."

He now perceived that she was sitting beside Jude, her arm being round his waist. Jude, like the rest of the company, bore on his face the signs of how deeply he had been indulging.

"Well, we've been waiting for certain legal hours to arrive, to tell the truth," she continued, bashfully, and making her spirituous crimson look as much like a maiden blush as possible. "Jude and I have decided to make up matters between us by tying the knot again, as we find we can't do without one another, after all. So, as a bright notion, we agreed to sit on till it was late enough, and go and do it off-hand."

Jude seemed to pay no great heed to what she was announcing, or, indeed, to anything whatever. The entrance of Taylor infused fresh spirit into the company, and they remained sitting, till Arabella whispered to her father: "Now we may as well go."

"But the parson don't know."

"Yes, I told him last night that we might come between eight and nine, as there were reasons of decency for doing it as early and quiet as possible, on account of it being our second marriage, which might make people curious to look on if they knew. He highly approved."

"Oh, very well, I'm ready," said her father, getting up and shaking himself.

"Now, old darling," she said to Jude, "come along, as you promised."

"When did I promise anything?" asked he, whom she had made so tipsy by her special knowledge of that line of business as almost to have made him sober again—or to seem so to those who did not know him.

"Why," said Arabella, affecting dismay, "you've promised to marry me several times as we've sat here to-night. These gentlemen have heard you."

"I don't remember it," said Jude, doggedly. "There's only one woman—but I won't mention her in this Capharnaum!"

Arabella looked towards her father. "Now, Mr. Fawley, be honorable," said Donn. "You and my daughter have been living here together these three or four days, quite on the understanding that you were going to marry her. Of course I shouldn't have had such goings-on in my house if I hadn't understood that. As a point of honor you must do it now."

"Don't say anything against my honor!" enjoined Jude, hotly, standing up. "I'd marry the W—— of Babylon rather than do anything dishonorable! No reflection on you, my dear. It is a mere rhetorical figure—what they call in the books, hyperbole."

"Keep your figures for your debts to friends who shelter you," said Donn.

"If I am bound in honor to marry her—as I suppose I am—though how I came to be here with her I know no more than a dead man — marry her I will, so help me

God! I have never behaved dishonorably to a woman or to any living thing. I am not a man who wants to save himself at the expense of the weaker among us!"

"There—never mind him, deary," said she, putting her cheek against Jude's. "Come up and wash your face, and just put yourself tidy, and off we'll go. Make it up with father."

They shook hands. Jude went up-stairs with her, and soon came down looking tidy and calm. Arabella, too, had hastily arranged herself, and, accompanied by Donn, away they went.

"Don't go," she said to the guests at parting. "I've told the little maid to get the breakfast while we are gone; and when we come back we'll all have some. A good strong cup of tea will set everybody right for going home."

When Arabella, Jude, and Donn had disappeared on their matrimonial errand the assembled guests yawned themselves wider awake, and discussed the situation with great interest. Tinker Taylor, being the most sober, reasoned the most lucidly.

"I don't wish to speak against friends," he said, "but it do seem a rare curiosity for a couple to marry over again! If they couldn't get on the first time when their minds were limp, they won't the second, by my reckoning."

"Do you think he'll do it?"

"He's been put upon his honor by the woman, so he med."

"He'd hardly do it straight off like this. He's got no license nor anything."

"She's got that, bless you. Didn't you hear her say so to her father?"

"Well," said Tinker Taylor, relighting his pipe at the gas-jet, "take her all together, limb by limb, she's not such a bad-looking piece—particular by candle-light. To be sure, halfpence that have been in circulation can't be

expected to look like new ones from the Mint. But for a woman that's been knocking about the four hemispheres for some time, she's passable enough. A little bit thick in the flitch, perhaps; but I like a woman that a puff o' wind won't blow down."

Their eyes followed the movements of the little girl as she spread the breakfast-cloth on the table they had been using, without wiping up the slops of the liquor. The curtains were undrawn, and the expression of the house made to look like morning. Some of the guests, however, fell asleep in their chairs. One or two went to the door, and gazed along the street more than once. Tinker Taylor was the chief of these, and after a time he came in with a leer on his face.

"By Gad, they are coming! I think the deed's done!"

"No," said Uncle Joe, following him in. "Take my word, he turned rusty at the last minute. They are walking in a very onusual way; and that's the meaning of it!"

They waited in silence till the wedding-party could be heard entering the house. First into the room came Arabella, boisterously; and her face was enough to show that her strategy had succeeded.

"Mrs. Fawley, I presume?" said Tinker Taylor, with mock courtesy.

"Certainly. Mrs. Fawley again," replied Arabella, blandly, pulling off her glove and holding out her left hand. "There's the padlock, see! . . . Well, he was a very nice, gentlemanly man indeed — I mean the clergyman. He said to me, as gentle as a babe, when all was done: 'Mrs. Fawley, I congratulate you heartily,' he says. 'For having heard your history, and that of your husband, I think you have both done the right and proper thing. And for your past errors as a wife, and his as a husband, I think you ought now to be forgiven by the world, as you have forgiven each other,' says he. Yes; he was a very nice, gentlemanly man. 'The church don't recognize divorce in her dogma, strictly speaking,' he says;

'and bear in mind the words of the Service in your goings out and your comings in: What God hath joined together let no man put asunder.' Yes; he was a very nice, gentlemanly man. . . . But Jude, my dear, you were enough to make a cat laugh! You walked that straight, and held yourself that steady, that one would have thought you were going 'prentice to a judge; though I knew you were seeing double all the time, from the way you fumbled with my finger."

"I said I'd do anything to—save a woman's honor," muttered Jude, "and I've done it!"

"Well, now, old deary, come along and have some breakfast."

"I want—some—more whiskey," said Jude, stolidly.

"Nonsense, dear. Not now! There's no more left. The tea will take the muddle out of our heads, and we shall be as fresh as larks."

"All right. I've—married you. She said I ought to marry you again, and I have straightway. It is true religion! Ha—ha—ha!"

VIII

MICHAELMAS came and passed, and Jude and his wife, who had lived but a short time in her father's house after their marriage, were in lodgings on the top floor of a house nearer to the centre of the city.

He had done a few days' work during the two or three months since the event, but his health had been indifferent, and it was now precarious. He was sitting in an armchair before the fire, and coughed a good deal.

"I've got a bargain for my trouble in marrying thee over again!" Arabella was saying to him. "I shall have to keep 'ee entirely—that's what 'twill come to! I shall have to make black-pot and sausages, and hawk 'em about the street, all to support an invalid husband I'd no business to be saddled with at all. Why didn't you keep your health, deceiving one like this? You were well enough when I married you!"

"Ah, yes!" said he, laughing acridly. "I have been thinking of my foolish feeling about the pig you and I killed during our first marriage. I feel now that the greatest mercy that could be vouchsafed to me would be that something should serve me as I served that animal."

This was the sort of discourse that went on between them every day now. The landlord of the lodging, who had heard that they were a queer couple, had doubted if they were married at all, especially as he had seen Arabella kiss Jude one evening when she had taken a little cordial; and he was about to give them notice to quit, till by chance overhearing her one night haranguing Jude in rattling terms, and ultimately flinging a shoe at his head,

he recognized the note of ordinary wedlock; and concluding that they must be respectable, said no more.

Jude did not get any better, and one day he requested Arabella, with considerable hesitation, to execute a commission for him. She asked him, indifferently, what it was.

"To write to Sue."

"What in the name—do you want me to write to her for?"

"To ask how she is, and if she'll come to see me, because I'm ill, and should like to see her—once again."

"It is like you to insult a lawful wife by asking such a thing!"

"It is just in order not to insult you that I ask you to do it. You know I love Sue. I don't wish to mince the matter—there stands the fact: I love her. I could find a dozen ways of sending a letter to her without your knowledge. But I wish to be quite above-board with you and with her husband. A message through you asking her to come is at least free from any odor of intrigue. If she retains any of her old nature at all, she'll come."

"You've no respect for marriage whatever, or its rights and duties!"

"What *does* it matter what my opinions are—a wretch like me! Can it matter to anybody in the world who comes to see me for half an hour—here with one foot in the grave! . . . Come, please write, Arabella!" he pleaded. "Repay my candor by a little generosity!"

"I should think *not!*"

"Not just once? Oh, do!" He felt that his physical weakness had taken away all his dignity.

"What do you want *her* to know how you are for? She don't want to see 'ee. She's the rat that forsook the sinking ship!"

"Don't, don't!"

"And I stuck to un—the more fool I! Have that strumpet in the house, indeed!"

Almost as soon as the words were spoken Jude sprang

from the chair, and before Arabella knew where she was he had her on her back upon a little couch which stood there, he kneeling above her.

"Say another word of that sort," he whispered, "and I'll kill you—here and now! I've everything to gain by it—my own death not being the least part. So don't think there's no meaning in what I say!"

"What do you want me to do?" gasped Arabella.

"Promise never to speak of her!"

"Very well. I do."

"I take your word," he said, scornfully, as he loosened her. "But what it is worth I can't say."

"You couldn't kill the pig, but you could kill me!"

"Ah—there you have me! No, I couldn't kill you—even in a passion. Taunt away!"

He then began coughing very much, and she estimated his life with an appraiser's eye as he sank back ghastly pale. "I'll send for her," Arabella murmured, "if you'll agree to my being in the room with you all the time she's here."

The softer side of his nature, the desire to see Sue, made him unable to resist the offer even now, provoked as he had been; and he replied, breathlessly, "Yes, I agree. Only send for her."

In the evening he inquired if she had written.

"Yes," she said; "I wrote a note telling her you were ill, and asking her to come to-morrow or the day after. I haven't posted it yet."

The next day Jude wondered if she really did post it, but would not ask her; and foolish Hope, that lives on a drop and a crumb, made him restless with expectation. He knew the times of the possible trains, and listened on each occasion for sounds of her.

She did not come; but Jude would not address Arabella again thereon. He hoped and expected all the next day, but no Sue appeared; neither was there any note of reply. Then Jude decided in the privacy of his mind

that Arabella had never posted hers, although she had written it. There was something in her manner which told it. His physical weakness was such that he shed tears at the disappointment when she was not there to see. His suspicions were, in fact, well founded. Arabella, like other nurses, thought that your duty towards your invalid was to pacify him by any means short of really acting upon his fancies.

He never said another word to her about his wish or his conjecture. A silent, undiscerned resolve grew up in him, which gave him, if not strength, stability and calm. One mid-day when, after an absence of two hours, she came into the room, she beheld the chair empty.

Down she flopped on the bed, and, sitting, meditated. "Now, where the devil is my man gone to!" she said.

A driving rain from the northeast had been falling with more or less intermission all the morning, and looking from the window at the dripping spouts it seemed impossible to believe that any sick man would have ventured out to almost certain death. Yet a conviction possessed Arabella that he had gone out, and it became a certainty when she had searched the house. "If he's such a fool, let him be!" she said. "I can do no more."

Jude was at that moment in a railway train that was drawing near to Alfredston, oddly swathed, pale as a monumental figure in alabaster, and much stared at by other passengers. An hour later his thin form, in the long great-coat and blanket he had come with, but without an umbrella, could have been seen walking along the five-mile road to Marygreen. On his face showed the determined purpose that alone sustained him, but to which his weakness afforded a sorry foundation. By the up-hill walk he was quite blown, but he pressed on; and at half-past three o'clock stood by the familiar well at Marygreen. The rain was keeping everybody in-doors; Jude crossed the green to the church without observation, and found the building open. Here he stood, looking forth at the

school, whence he could hear the usual sing-song tones of the little voices that had not learned Creation's groan.

He waited till a small boy came from the school—one evidently allowed out before hours for some reason or other. Jude held up his hand, and the child came.

"Please call at the school-house and ask Mrs. Phillotson if she will be kind enough to come to the church for a few minutes."

The child departed, and Jude heard him knock at the door of the dwelling. He himself went farther into the church. Everything was new, except a few pieces of carving preserved from the wrecked old fabric, now fixed against the new walls. He stood by these; they seemed akin to the perished people of that place who were his ancestors and Sue's.

A light footstep, which might have been accounted no more than an added drip to the rainfall, sounded in the porch, and he looked round.

"Oh, I didn't think it was you! I didn't—oh, Jude!" A hysterical catch in her breath ended in a succession of them. He advanced, but she quickly recovered and went back.

"Don't go—don't go!" he implored. "This is my last time! I thought it would be less intrusive than to enter your house. And I shall never come again. Don't, then, be unmerciful. Sue, Sue! we are acting by the letter; and 'the letter killeth!'"

"I'll stay—I won't be unkind!" she said, her mouth quivering and her tears flowing as she allowed him to come closer. "But why did you come and do this wrong thing, after doing such a right thing as you have done?"

"What right thing?"

"Marrying Arabella again. It was in the Alfredston paper. She has never been other than yours, Jude—in a proper sense. And therefore you did so well — oh, so well!—in recognizing it—and taking her to you again."

"God above!—and is that all I've come to hear? If

there's anything more degrading, immoral, unnatural, than another in my life, it is this meretricious contract with Arabella which has been called doing the right thing! And you, too — you call yourself Phillotson's wife! *His* wife! You are mine!"

"Don't make me rush away from you — I can't bear much! But on this point I am decided."

"I cannot understand how you did it—how you think it—I cannot!"

"Never mind that. He is a kind husband to me, and I—I've wrestled and struggled, and fasted and prayed. I have nearly brought my body into complete subjection. And you mustn't—will you—wake—"

"Oh, you darling little fool; where is your reason? You seem to have suffered the loss of your faculties! I would argue with you if I didn't know that a woman in your state of feeling is quite beyond all appeals to her brains. Or is it that you are humbugging yourself, as so many women do about these things, and don't actually believe what you pretend to, and only are indulging in the luxury of the emotion raised by an affected belief?"

"Luxury! How can you be so cruel!"

"You dear, sad, soft, most melancholy wreck of a promising human intellect that it has ever been my lot to behold! Where is your scorn of convention gone? I *would* have died game!"

"You crush, almost insult me, Jude! Go away from me!" She turned off quickly.

"I will. I would never come to see you again, even if I had the strength to come, which I shall not have any more. Sue, Sue, you are not worth a man's love!"

Her bosom began to go up and down. "I can't endure you to say that!" she burst out; and her eye resting on him a moment, she turned back impulsively. "Don't, don't scorn me! Kiss me—oh, kiss me!—lots of times, and say I am not a coward and a contemptible humbug—I can't bear it!" She rushed up to him, and, with her

mouth on his, continued: "I must tell you—oh, I must—my darling Love! It has been—only a church marriage—an apparent marriage, I mean! He suggested it at the very first!"

"How?"

"I mean it is a nominal marriage only. It hasn't been more than that at all since I came back to him!"

"Sue!" he said. Pressing her to him in his arms, he bruised her lips with kisses. "If misery can know happiness, I have a moment's happiness now! Now, in the name of all you hold holy, tell me the truth and no lie. You do love me still?"

"I do! You know it too well! . . . But I *mustn't* do this! I mustn't kiss you back as I would!"

"But do!"

"And yet you are so dear!—and you look so ill—"

"And so do you! There's one more, in memory of our dead little children—yours and mine!"

The words struck her like a blow, and she bent her head. "I *mustn't*—I *can't* go on with this!" she gasped presently. "But there, there, darling, I give you back your kisses; I do, I do! . . . And now I'll *hate* myself forever for my sin!"

"No; let me make my last appeal. Listen to this: We've both remarried out of our senses. I was made drunk to do it. You were the same. I was gin-drunk; you were creed-drunk. Either form of intoxication takes away the nobler vision. . . . Let us then shake off our mistakes, and run away together!"

"No; again no! . . . Why do you tempt me so far, Jude! It is too merciless! . . . But I've got over myself now. Don't follow me—don't look at me. Leave me, for pity's sake!"

She ran up the church to the east end, and Jude did as she requested. He did not turn his head, but took up his blanket, which she had not seen, and went straight out. As he passed the end of the church she heard his coughs

mingling with the rain on the windows, and in a last instinct of human affection, even now unsubdued by her fetters, she sprang up as if to go and succor him. But she knelt down again, and stopped her ears with her hands till all possible sound of him had passed away.

He was by this time at the corner of the green, from which the path ran across the fields in which he had scared rooks as a boy. He turned and looked back, once, at the building which still contained Sue; and then went on, knowing that his eyes would light on that scene no more.

There are cold spots up and down Wessex in autumn and winter weather, but the coldest of all, when a north or east wind is blowing, is the crest of the down by the Brown House, where the road to Alfredston crosses the old Ridgeway. Here the first winter sleets and snows fall and lie, and here the spring frost lingers last unthawed. Here in the teeth of the northeast wind and rain Jude now pursued his way, wet through, the necessary slowness of his walk from lack of his former strength being insufficient to maintain his heat. He came to the mile-stone, and, raining as it was, spread his blanket and lay down there to rest. Before moving on he went and felt at the back of the stone for his own carving. It was still there, but nearly obliterated by moss. He passed the spot where the gibbet of his ancestor and Sue's had stood, and descended the hill.

It was dark when he reached Alfredston, where he had a cup of tea, the deadly chill that began to creep into his bones being too much for him to endure fasting. To get home he had to travel by a steam tram-car and two branches of railway, with much waiting at a junction. He did not reach Christminster till ten o'clock.

JUDE AT THE MILE-STONE

IX

On the platform stood Arabella. She looked him up and down.

"You've been to see her?" she asked.

"I have," said Jude, literally tottering with cold and lassitude.

"Well, now you'd best march along home."

The water ran out of him as he went, and he was compelled to lean against the wall to support himself while coughing.

"You've done for yourself by this, young man," said she. "I don't know whether you know it."

"Of course I do. I meant to do for myself."

"What—to commit suicide?"

"Certainly."

"Well, I'm blest! Kill yourself for a woman!"

"Listen to me, Arabella. You think you are the stronger; and so you are, in a physical sense, now. You could push me over like a ninepin. You did not send that letter the other day, and I could not resent your conduct. But I am not so weak in another way as you think. I made up my mind that a man confined to his room by inflammation of the lungs, a fellow who had only two wishes left in the world—to see a particular woman and then to die—could neatly accomplish those two wishes at one stroke by taking this journey in the rain. That I've done. I have seen her for the last time, and I've finished myself—put an end to a feverish life which ought never to have been begun."

"Lord, you do talk lofty! Won't you have something warm to drink?"

"No, thank you. Let's go home."

They went along by the silent colleges, and Jude kept stopping.

"What are you looking at?"

"Stupid fancies. I see, in a way, those spirits of the dead again, on this my last walk, that I saw when I first came here!"

"What a curious chap you are!"

"I seem to see them, and almost hear them rustling. But I don't revere all of them, as I did then. I don't believe in half of them. The theologians, the apologists, and their kin the metaphysicians, the high-handed statesmen, and others, no longer interest me. All that has been spoiled for me by the grind of stern reality!"

The expression of Jude's corpse-like face in the watery lamplight was indeed as if he saw people where there was nobody. At moments he stood still by an archway, like one watching a figure walk out; then he would look at a window like one discerning a familiar face behind it. He seemed to hear voices, whose words he repeated as if to gather their meaning.

"They seem laughing at me!"

"Who?"

"Oh, I was talking to myself! The phantoms all about here, in the college archways and windows. They used to look friendly in the old days, particularly Addison and Gibbon and Johnson and Dr. Browne and Bishop Ken—"

"Come along, do! Phantoms! There's neither living nor dead hereabouts except a damn policeman! I never saw the streets emptier."

"Fancy! The Poet of Liberty used to walk here, and the great Dissector of Melancholy there!"

"I don't want to hear about 'em. They bore me!"

"Walter Raleigh is beckoning to me from that lane—Wycliffe—Harvey—Hooker—Arnold—and a whole crowd of Tractarian Shades—"

"I *don't want* to know their names, I tell you! What do I care about folk dead and gone? Upon my soul, you are more sober when you have been drinking than when you have not!"

"I must rest a moment," he said; and as he paused, holding to the railings, he measured with his eye the height of a college front. "This is old Rubric; and this Sarcophagus; and up that lane Crozier and Tudor; and all down there is Cardinal with its long front, and its windows with lifted eyebrows, representing the polite surprise of the University at the efforts of such as I."

"Come along, and I'll treat you."

"Very well. It will help me home, for I feel the chilly fog from the meadows of Cardinal as if death-claws were grabbing me through and through. As Antigone said, I am neither a dweller among men nor ghosts. But, Arabella, when I am dead, you'll see my spirit flitting up and down here among these!"

"Pooh! You won't die. You are tough enough yet, old man."

It was night at Marygreen, and the rain of the afternoon showed no sign of abatement. About the time at which Jude and Arabella were walking the streets of Christminster homeward, the Widow Edlin crossed the green and opened the back door of the school-master's dwelling, which she often did now before bedtime, to assist Sue in putting things away.

Sue was muddling helplessly in the kitchen, for she was not a good housewife, though she tried to be, and grew impatient of domestic details.

"Lord love 'ee, what do ye do that yourself for when I've come o' purpose? You knew I should come."

"Oh, I don't know—I forgot! No, I didn't forget. I did it to discipline myself. I have scrubbed the stairs since eight o'clock. I *must* practise myself in my household duties. I've shamefully neglected them!"

"Why should ye? He'll get a better school, perhaps be a parson, in time, and you'll keep two servants. 'Tis a pity to spoil them pretty hands."

"Don't talk of my pretty hands, Mrs. Edlin. This pretty body of mine has been the ruin of me already!"

"Pshoo—you've got no body to speak of! You put me more in mind of a sperrit. But there seems something wrong to-night, my dear. Husband cross?"

"No. He never is. He's gone to bed early."

"Then what is it?"

"I cannot tell you. I have done wrong to-day. And I want to eradicate it. . . . Well—I will tell you this: Jude has been here this afternoon, and I find I still love him—oh, grossly! I cannot tell you more."

"Ah!" said the widow. "I told 'ee how 'twould be!"

"But it sha'n't be! I have not told my husband of his visit; it is not necessary to trouble him about it, as I never mean to see Jude any more. But I am going to make my conscience right on my duty to Richard—by doing a penance—the ultimate thing. I must!"

"I wouldn't—since he agrees to it being otherwise, and it has gone on three months very well as it is."

"Yes—he agrees to my living as I choose; but I feel it is an indulgence I ought not to exact from him. It ought not to have been accepted by me. To reverse it will be terrible—but I must be more just to him. Oh, why was I so unheroic!"

"What is it you don't like in him?" asked Mrs. Edlin, curiously.

"I cannot tell you. It is something. . . . I cannot say. The mournful thing is, that nobody would admit it as a reason for feeling as I do; so that no excuse is left me."

"Did you ever tell Jude what it was?"

"Never."

"I've heard strange tales o' husbands in my time," observed the widow, in a lowered voice. "They say that when the saints were upon the earth devils used to take

husbands' forms o' nights, and get poor women into all sorts of trouble. But I don't know why that should come into my head, for it is only a tale. . . . What a wind and rain it is to-night! Well, don't be in a hurry to alter things, my dear. Think it over."

"No, no! I've screwed my weak soul up to treating him more courteously—and it must be now—at once—before I break down!"

"I don't think you ought to force your nature. No woman ought to be expected to."

"It is my duty. I will drink my cup to the dregs!"

Half an hour later, when Mrs. Edlin put on her bonnet and shawl to leave, Sue seemed to be seized with vague terror.

"No, no—don't go, Mrs. Edlin," she implored, her eyes enlarged, and with a quick, nervous look over her shoulder.

"But it is bedtime, child."

"Yes, but—there's the little spare room—my room that was. It is quite ready. Please stay, Mrs. Edlin — I shall want you in the morning."

"Oh, well, I don't mind, if you wish. Nothing will happen to my four old walls, whether I be there or no."

She then fastened up the doors, and they ascended the stairs together.

"Wait here, Mrs. Edlin," said Sue. "I'll go into my old room a moment by myself."

Leaving the widow on the landing, Sue turned to the chamber which had been hers exclusively since her arrival at Marygreen, and, pushing to the door, knelt down by the bed for a minute or two. She then arose, and, taking her night-gown from the pillow, undressed, and came out to Mrs. Edlin. A man could be heard snoring in the room opposite. She wished Mrs. Edlin good-night, and the widow entered the room that Sue had just vacated.

Sue unlatched the other chamber door, and, as if seized with faintness, sank down outside it. Getting up again,

she half opened the door, and said, "Richard." As the word came out of her mouth she visibly shuddered.

The snoring had quite ceased for some time, but he did not reply. Sue seemed relieved, and hurried back to Mrs. Edlin's chamber. "Are you in bed, Mrs. Edlin?" she asked.

"No, dear," said the widow, opening the door. "I be old and slow, and it takes me a long while to un-ray. I ha'n't unlaced my jumps yet."

"I—don't hear him! And perhaps—perhaps—"

"What, child?"

"Perhaps he's dead!" she gasped. "And then—I should be *free*, and I could go to Jude! . . . Ah—no—I forgot *her*—and God!"

"Let's go and hearken. No—he's snoring again. But the rain and the wind is so loud that you can hardly hear anything but between whiles."

Sue had dragged herself back. "Mrs. Edlin, good-night again! I am sorry I called you out." The widow retreated a second time.

The strained, resigned look returned to Sue's face when she was alone. "I must do it—I must! I must drink to the dregs!" she whispered. "Richard!" she said again.

"Hey—what? Is that you, Susanna?"

"Yes."

"What do you want? Anything the matter? Wait a moment." He pulled on some articles of clothing, and came to the door. "Yes?"

"When we were at Shaston I jumped out of the window rather than that you should come near me. I have never reversed that treatment till now—when I have come to beg your pardon for it, and ask you to let me in."

"Perhaps you only think you ought to do this? I don't wish you to come against your impulses, as I have said."

"But I beg to be admitted." She waited a moment, and repeated, "I beg to be admitted! I have been in

error—even to-day. I have exceeded my rights. I did not mean to tell you, but perhaps I ought. I sinned against you this afternoon."

"How?"

"I met Jude! I didn't know he was coming. And—"

"Well?"

"I kissed him, and let him kiss me."

"Oh—the old story!"

"Richard, I didn't know we were going to kiss each other till we did!"

"How many times?"

"A good many. I don't know. I am horrified to look back on it, and the least I can do after it is to come to you like this."

"Come—this is pretty bad, after what I've done! . . . Anything else to confess?"

"No." She had been intending to say: "I called him my darling Love." But, as a contrite woman always keeps back a little, that portion of the scene remained untold. She went on: "I am never going to see him any more. He spoke of some things of the past, and it overcame me. He spoke of—the children. But, as I have said, I am glad—almost glad, I mean—that they are dead, Richard. It blots out all that life of mine!"

"Well—about not seeing him again any more. Come—you really mean this?" There was something in Phillotson's tone now which seemed to show that his three months of remarriage with Sue had somehow not been so satisfactory as his magnanimity or amative patience had anticipated.

"Yes, yes!"

"Perhaps you'll swear it on the New Testament?"

"I will."

He went back to the room and brought out a little brown Testament. "Now then: So help you God!"

She swore.

"Very good!"

"Now I supplicate you, Richard, to whom I belong, and whom I wish to honor and obey, as I vowed, to let me in."

"Think it over well. You know what it means. Having you back was one thing—this another. So think again."

"I have thought—I wish this!"

"That's a complaisant spirit—and perhaps you are right. With a lover hanging about, a half-marriage should be completed. But I repeat my reminder this third and last time."

"It is my wish!... O God!"

"What did you say O God for?"

"I didn't know!"

"Yes, you do! But—" He gloomily considered her thin and fragile form a moment longer as she crouched before him in her night-clothes. "Well, I thought it might end like this," he said, presently. "I owe you nothing, after these signs; but I'll take you in at your word, and forgive you."

He put his arm round her to lift her up. Sue started back.

"What's the matter?" he asked, speaking, for the first time, sternly. "You shrink from me again?—just as formerly!"

"No, Richard—I—I—was not thinking—"

"You wish to come in here?"

"Yes."

"You still bear in mind what it means?"

"Yes. It is my duty!"

Placing the candlestick on the chest of drawers, he led her through the doorway, and, lifting her bodily, kissed her. A wild look of aversion passed over her face, but, clinching her teeth, she uttered no cry.

Mrs. Edlin had by this time undressed, and was about to get into bed, when she said to herself: "Ah—perhaps I'd better go and see if the little thing is all right. How it do blow and rain!"

The widow went out on the landing, and saw that Sue had disappeared. "Ah! Poor soul! Weddings be funerals, 'a b'lieve, nowadays. Fifty-five years ago, come fall, since my man and I married! Times have changed since then!"

X

Despite himself, Jude recovered somewhat, and worked at his trade for several weeks. After Christmas, however, he broke down again.

With the money he had earned he shifted his lodgings to a yet more central part of the town. But Arabella saw that he was not likely to do much work for a long while, and was cross enough at the turn affairs had taken since her remarriage to him. "I'm hanged if you haven't been clever in this last stroke," she would say—"to get a nurse for nothing by marrying me!"

Jude was absolutely indifferent to what she said, and, indeed, often regarded her abuse in a humorous light. Sometimes his mood was more earnest, and as he lay he often rambled on upon the defeat of his early aims.

"Every man has some little power in some one direction," he would say. "I was never really stout enough for the stone trade, particularly the fixing. Moving the blocks always used to strain me, and standing the trying draughts in buildings before the windows are in always gave me colds, and I think that began the mischief inside. But I felt I could do one thing if I had the opportunity. I could accumulate ideas and impart them to others. I wonder if the Founders had such as I in their minds—a fellow good for nothing else but that particular thing? . . . I hear that soon there is going to be a better chance for such helpless students as I was. There are schemes afoot for making the University less exclusive, and extending its influence. I don't know much about it. And it is too

late, too late for me! Ah — and for how many worthier ones before me!"

"How you keep a-mumbling!" said Arabella. "I should have thought you'd have got over all that craze about books by this time. And so you would, if you'd had any sense to begin with. You are as bad now as when we were first married."

On one occasion while soliloquizing thus he called her "Sue" unconsciously.

"I wish you'd mind who you are talking to!" said Arabella, indignantly. "Calling a respectable married woman by the name of that—" She remembered herself, and he did not catch the word.

But in the course of time, when she saw how things were going, and how very little she had to fear from Sue's rivalry, she had a fit of generosity. "I suppose you want to see your—Sue?" she said. "Well, I don't mind her coming. You can have her here if you like."

"I don't wish to see her again."

"Oh—that's a change!"

"And don't tell her anything about me—that I'm ill, or anything. She has chosen her course. Let her go!"

One day he received a surprise. Mrs. Edlin came to see him, quite on her own account. Jude's wife, whose feelings as to where his affections were centred had reached absolute indifference by this time, went out, leaving the old woman alone with Jude. He impulsively asked how Sue was, and then said, bluntly, remembering what Sue had told him: "I suppose they are still only husband and wife in name?"

Mrs. Edlin hesitated. "Well, no — it's different now. She's begun it quite lately—all of her own free-will."

"When did she begin?" he asked, quickly.

"The night after you came. But as a punishment to her poor self. He didn't wish it, but she insisted."

"Sue, my Sue—you darling fool—this is almost more than I can endure! . . . Mrs. Edlin—don't be frightened

at my rambling—I've got to talk to myself, lying here so many hours alone—she was once a woman whose intellect was to mine like a star to a benzoline lamp: who saw all *my* superstitions as cobwebs that she could brush away with a word. Then bitter affliction came to us, and her intellect broke, and she veered round to darkness. Strange difference of sex, that time and circumstance, which enlarge the views of most men, narrow the views of women almost invariably. And now the ultimate horror has come — her giving herself like this to what she loathes, in her enslavement to forms!—she, so sensitive, so shrinking, that the very wind seemed to blow on her with a touch of deference. . . . As for Sue and me, when we were at our own best, long ago—when our minds were clear, and our love of truth fearless—the time was not ripe for us! Our ideas were fifty years too soon to be any good to us. And so the resistance they met with brought reaction in her, and recklessness and ruin on me! . . . There —this, Mrs. Edlin, is how I go on to myself continually, as I lie here. I must be boring you awfully."

"Not at all, my dear boy. I could hearken to 'ee all day."

As Jude reflected more and more on her news, and grew more restless, he began in his mental agony to use terribly profane language about social conventions, which started a fit of coughing. Presently there came a knock at the door down-stairs. As nobody answered it, Mrs. Edlin herself went down.

The visitor said, blandly, "The doctor." The lanky form was that of Physician Vilbert, who had been called in by Arabella.

"How is my patient at present?" asked the physician.

"Oh, bad—very bad! Poor chap, he got excited, and do blaspeam terribly, since I let out some gossip by accident—the more to my blame. But there—you must excuse a man in suffering for what he says, and I hope God will forgive him."

"Ah! I'll go up and see him. Mrs. Fawley at home?"

"She's not in at present, but she'll be here soon."

Vilbert went; but though Jude had hitherto taken the medicines of that skilful practitioner with the greatest indifference, whenever poured down his throat by Arabella, he was now so brought to bay by events that he vented his opinion of Vilbert in the physician's face, and so forcibly, and with such striking epithets, that Vilbert soon scurried down-stairs again. At the door he met Arabella. Mrs. Edlin having left. Arabella inquired how he thought her husband was now, and seeing that the doctor looked ruffled, asked him to take something. He assented.

"I'll bring it to you here in the passage," she said. "There's nobody but me about the house to-day."

She brought him a bottle and a glass, and he drank. Arabella began shaking with suppressed laughter. "What is this, my dear?" he asked, smacking his lips.

"Oh, a drop of wine—and something in it." Laughing again, she said: "I poured your own love-philter into it, that you sold me at the Agricultural Show, don't you remember?"

"I do, I do! Clever woman! But you must be prepared for the consequences." Putting his arm round her shoulders, he kissed her there and then.

"Don't, don't," she whispered, laughing good-humoredly. "My man will hear."

She let him out of the house, and as she went back she said to herself, "Well, weak women must provide for a rainy day. And if my poor fellow up-stairs do go off—as I suppose he will soon—it's well to keep chances open. And I can't pick and choose now as I could when I was younger. And one must take the old if one can't get the young."

XI

THE last pages to which the chronicler of these lives would ask the reader's attention are concerned with the scene in and out of Jude's bedroom when leafy summer came round again.

His face was now so thin that his old friends would hardly have known him. It was afternoon, and Arabella was at the looking-glass curling her hair, which operation she performed by heating an umbrella-stay in the flame of a candle she had lighted, and using it upon the flowing lock. When she had finished this, practised a dimple, and put on her things, she cast her eyes round upon Jude. He seemed to be sleeping, though his position was an elevated one, his malady preventing him lying down.

Arabella, hatted, gloved, and ready, sat down and waited, as if expecting some one to come and take her place as nurse.

Certain sounds from without revealed that the town was in festivity, though little of the festival, whatever it might have been, could be seen here. Bells began to ring, and the notes came into the room through the open window, and travelled round Jude's head in a hum. They made her restless, and at last she said to herself, "Why ever doesn't father come?"

She looked again at Jude, critically gauged his ebbing life, as she had done so many times during the late months, and, glancing at his watch, which was hung up by way of timepiece, rose impatiently. Still he slept, and, coming to a resolution, she slipped from the room, closed the door noiselessly, and descended the stairs. The

house was empty. The attraction which moved Arabella to go abroad had evidently drawn away the other inmates long before.

It was a warm, cloudless, enticing day. She shut the front door, and hastened round into Chief Street, and when near the Theatre could hear the notes of the organ, a rehearsal for a coming concert being in progress. She entered under the archway of Oldgate College, where men were putting up awnings round the quadrangle for a ball in the Hall that evening. People who had come up from the country for the day were picnicking on the grass, and Arabella walked along the gravel paths and under the aged limes. But finding this place rather dull, she returned to the streets, and watched the carriages drawing up for the concert, numerous Dons and their wives, and undergraduates with gay female companions, crowding up likewise. When the doors were closed, and the concert began, she moved on.

The powerful notes of that concert rolled forth through the swinging yellow blinds of the open windows, over the house-tops, and into the still air of the lanes. They reached so far as to the room in which Jude lay, and it was about this time that his cough began again and awakened him.

As soon as he could speak he murmured, his eyes still closed: "A little water, please."

Nothing but the deserted room received his appeal, and he coughed to exhaustion again—saying, still more feebly: "Water—some water—Sue—Arabella!"

The room remained still as before. Presently he gasped again: "Throat—water—Sue—darling—drop of water—please—oh, please!"

No water came, and the organ notes, faint as a bee's hum, rolled in as before.

While he remained, his face changing, shouts and hurrahs came from somewhere in the direction of the river.

"Ah—yes! The Remembrance games," he murmured. "And I here. And Sue defiled!"

The hurrahs were repeated, drowning the faint organ notes. Jude's face changed more; he whispered, slowly, his lips scarcely moving:

"*Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, 'There is a man child conceived.'*"

("Hurrah!")

"*Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it. Lo, let that night be solitary, let no joyful voice come therein.*"

("Hurrah!")

"*Why died I not from the womb? Why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly? . . . For now should I have lain still and been quiet. I should have slept: then had I been at rest!*"

("Hurrah!")

"*There the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor. . . . The small and the great are there; and the servant is free from his master. Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul?*"

Meanwhile Arabella, on her journey to discover what was going on, took a short cut down a narrow street and through an obscure nook into the quad of Cardinal. It was full of bustle, and brilliant in the sunlight with flowers and other preparations for a ball here also. A carpenter nodded to her, one who had formerly been a fellow-workman of Jude's. A corridor was in course of erection from the entrance to the Hall staircase, of gay red-and-buff bunting. Wagon-loads of boxes containing bright plants in full bloom were being placed about, and the great staircase was covered with red cloth. She nodded to one workman and another, and ascended to the Hall on the strength of their acquaintance, where they were putting down a new floor and decorating for the dance.

The cathedral bell close at hand was sounding for five-o'clock service.

"I should not mind having a spin there with a fellow's arm round my waist," she said to one of the men. "But, Lord, I must be getting home again—there's a lot to do. No dancing for me!"

When she reached home she was met at the door by Stagg and one or two other of Jude's fellow stone-workers. "We are just going down to the river," said the former, "to see the boat-bumping. But we've called round on our way to ask how your husband is."

"He's sleeping nicely, thank you," said Arabella.

"That's right. Well, now, can't you give yourself half an hour's relaxation, Mrs. Fawley, and come along with us? 'Twould do you good."

"I should like to go," said she. "I've never seen the boat-racing, and I hear it is good fun."

"Come along!"

"How I *wish* I could!" She looked longingly down the street. "Wait a minute, then. I'll just run up and see how he is now. Father is with him, I believe, so I can most likely come."

They waited, and she entered. Down-stairs the inmates were absent as before, having, in fact, gone in a body to the river, where the procession of boats was to pass. When she reached the bedroom she found that her father had not even now come.

"Why couldn't he have been here!" she said, impatiently. "He wants to see the boats himself—that's what it is!"

However, on looking round to the bed, she brightened, for she saw that Jude was apparently sleeping, though he was not in the usual half-elevated posture necessitated by his cough. He had slipped down, and lay flat. A second glance caused her to start, and she went to the bed. His face was quite white, and gradually becoming rigid. She touched his fingers; they were cold, though his body was

still warm. She listened at his chest. All was still within. The bumping of near thirty years had ceased.

After her first appalled sense of what had happened, the faint notes of a military or other brass band from the river reached her ears; and in a provoked tone she exclaimed: "To think he should die just now! Why did he die just now!" Then, meditating another moment or two, she went to the door, softly closed it as before, and again descended the stairs.

"Here she is!" said one of the workmen. "We wondered if you were coming, after all. Come along; we must be quick to get a good place. . . . Well, how is he? Sleeping well still? Of course, we don't want to drag 'ee away if—"

"Oh yes—sleeping quite sound. He won't wake yet," she said, hurriedly.

They went with the crowd down Cardinal Street, where they presently reached the bridge, and the gay barges burst upon their view. Thence they passed by a narrow slit down to the river-side path — now dusty, hot, and thronged. Almost as soon as they had arrived the grand procession of boats began, the oars smacking with a loud kiss on the face of the stream as they were lowered from the perpendicular.

"Oh, I say—how jolly! I'm glad I've come," said Arabella. "And — it can't hurt my husband — my being away."

On the opposite side of the river, on the crowded barges, were gorgeous nosegays of feminine beauty, fashionably arrayed in green, pink, blue, and white. The blue flag of the boat club denoted the centre of interest, beneath which a band in red uniform gave out the notes she had already heard in the death-chamber. Collegians of all sorts, in canoes with ladies, watching keenly for "our" boat, darted up and down. While she regarded the lively scene somebody touched Arabella in the ribs, and, looking round, she saw Vilbert.

"That philter is operating, you know!" he said, with a leer. "Shame on 'ee to wreck a heart so!"

"I sha'n't talk of love to-day."

"Why not? It is a general holiday."

She did not reply. Vilbert's arm stole round her waist, which act could be performed unobserved in the crowd. An arch expression overspread Arabella's face at the feel of the arm, but she kept her eyes on the river as if she did not know of the embrace.

The crowd surged, pushing Arabella and her friends sometimes nearly into the river, and she would have laughed heartily at the horse-play that succeeded if the imprint on her mind's eye of a pale, statuesque countenance she had lately gazed upon had not sobered her a little.

The fun on the water reached the acme of excitement; there were immersions, there were shouts; the race was lost and won, the pink and blue and yellow ladies retired from the barges, and the people who had watched began to move.

"Well, it's been awfully good!" cried Arabella. "But I think I must get back to my poor man. Father is there, so far as I know; but I had better get back."

"What's your hurry?"

"Well, I must go. . . . Dear, dear, this is awkward!"

At the narrow gangway where the people ascended from the river-side path to the bridge the crowd was literally jammed into one hot mass—Arabella and Vilbert with the rest; and here they remained motionless, Arabella exclaiming, "Dear, dear!" more and more impatiently; for it had just occurred to her mind that if Jude were discovered to have died alone an inquest might be deemed necessary.

"What a fidget you are, my love," said the physician, who, being pressed close against her by the throng, had no need of personal effort for contact. "Just as well have patience; there's no getting away yet!"

It was nearly ten minutes before the wedged multitude moved sufficiently to let them pass through. As soon as she got up into the street Arabella hastened on, forbidding the physician to accompany her farther that day. She did not go straight to her house, but to the abode of a woman who performed the last necessary offices for the poorer dead, where she knocked.

"My husband has just gone, poor soul," she said. "Can you come and lay him out?"

Arabella waited a few minutes; and the two women went along, elbowing their way through the stream of fashionable people pouring out of Cardinal meadow, and being nearly knocked down by the carriages.

"I must call at the sexton's about the bell, too," said Arabella. "It is just round here, isn't it? I'll meet you at my door."

By ten o'clock that night Jude was lying on the bedstead at his lodging covered with a sheet, and straight as an arrow. Through the partly opened window the joyous throb of a waltz entered from the ball-room at Cardinal.

Two days later, when the sky was equally cloudless, and the air equally still, two persons stood beside Jude's open coffin in the same little bedroom. On one side was Arabella, on the other the Widow Edlin. They were both looking at Jude's face, the worn old eyelids of Mrs. Edlin being red.

"How beautiful he is!" said she.

"Yes. He's a 'andsome corpse," said Arabella.

The window was still open to ventilate the room, and it being about noontide the clear air was motionless and quiet without. From a distance came voices, and an apparent noise of persons stamping.

"What's that?" murmured the old woman.

"Oh, that's the doctors in the Theatre, conferring Honorary degrees on the Duke of Hamptonshire and a

lot more illustrious gents of that sort. It's Remembrance Week, you know. The cheers come from the young men."

"Aye; young and strong-lunged! Not like our poor boy here."

An occasional word, as from some one making a speech, floated from the open windows of the Theatre across to this quiet corner, at which there seemed to be a smile of some sort upon the marble features of Jude; while the old, superseded, Delphin editions of Virgil and Homer, and the dog-eared Greek Testament on the neighboring shelf, and the few other volumes of the sort that he had not parted with, roughened with stone-dust where he had been in the habit of catching them up for a few minutes between his labors, seemed to pale to a sickly cast at the sounds. The bells struck out joyously, and their reverberations travelled round the bedroom.

Arabella's eyes removed from Jude to Mrs. Edlin. "D'ye think she will come?" she asked.

"I could not say. She swore not to see him again."

"How is she looking?"

"Tired and miserable, poor heart. Years and years older than when you saw her last. Quite a staid, worn woman now. 'Tis the man—she can't stomach un, even now!"

"If Jude had been alive to see her, he would hardly have cared for her any more, perhaps."

"That's what we don't know. . . . Didn't he ever ask you to send for her, since he came to see her in that strange way?"

"No. Quite the contrary. I offered to send, and he said I was not to let her know how ill he was."

"Did he forgive her?"

"Not as I know."

"Well—poor little thing, 'tis to be believed she's found forgiveness somewhere! She said she had found peace!"

"She may swear that on her knees to the holy cross upon her necklace till she's hoarse, but it won't be true!" said Arabella. "She's never found peace since she left his arms, and never will again till she's as he is now!"

THE END

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